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MODERN PHOTOPLAY WRITING

ITS CRAFTSMANSHIP

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Modern Photoplay Writing

Its Craftsmanship

A Manual Demonstrating the Structural and Dramatic Principles of the New Art as Practiced by the Modern Photoplaywright

By HOWARD T. DIMICK

Author of

"PHOTOPLAY MAKING"

IN TWO BOOKS

1922

JAMES KNAPP REEVE, Publisher

Franklin, Ohio

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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Index of Chapters

BOOK ONE

Foreword 7-9

1. Introduction to the Study 11-20
2. Technique — The Tools of the Dramatist 21-28
3. Dramatic Material and The three Problems of a Play 29-38
4. The Formula in Playwriting 39-46
5. Plot and Plotting 47-63
6. Strategy and Tactics; Plot and Details 64-70
7. Externalizing the Play 71-80
8. Events, Incidents and Their Causal Connection 81-92
9. The Dramatic and Undramatic 93-105
10. Suspense, Excitement and Crisis 106-117
11. Foretokening Certain Events 118-128
12. Surprise, or the Unforeseen 129-141
13. Impediments, Obstacles and Accelerators 142-153
14. Characters, Characterization and Character Development, 154-163
15. Sequence, Continuity, or Relationship of the Parts 164-176

BOOK TWO

16. The Scenario and Scene Writing 179-193
17. Continuity and Abruptness in Development 194-205
18. Tactics and Business; Managing Details 206-218
19. Plausibility in Details; Improbability 219-229
20. Art, Life and Realism 230-243
21. The Mechanism Which Controls; Cameracraft 244-254
22. Practicability, Expense and Commercialism 255-262
23. A Specimen Scenario, and How Scenarios Are Written 263-329
24. Detailed Synopses, and Analysis of Synoptical Structure 330-365
25. Preparation of Mss 366-372
26. Censorship, the Growing Menace 373-379
27. Disposing of the Story 380-387

Appendix 388-392

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Foreword

THE demand for a manual presenting the essentials of playwriting for the screen from the latest point of view, a point of view necessitated by recent changes in the industry, has led the author of this book to hope that it will fill the long-existing hiatus in the working libraries of our screen authors.

Since the publication of his first book,* the author has not altered his attitude toward the purely photographic and mechanical aspects of the art. A certain amount of knowledge of these is indispensable to the scenarist or synoptist, especially to the staff continuity writer; but no quantity of it will make a playwright even from promising material; for it is the art of playwriting which primarily concerns our future screen-dramatists. Happily, the author's attitude has been largely justified by recent changes in the industry. Let us hope that the newer era will encourage more talent than was developed by the blatant and short-sighted policies of the past.

The author has seen the principles set forth in this book effectively applied in the work of many authors for the screen, including his own; and he, therefore, ventures to hope that the aspirant of talent will find in the following chapters the groundwork of constructive or synthetic theory essential to the successful writer of synopses for the screen; he believes that adherence to the

*Photoplay Making, 1915.

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principles will shorten the way to success. While no one manual can present the subject in its entirety, he has endeavored to give the aspirant all that seems demanded in the practice of his art.

The author has often wondered why no chairs of photoplay writing have been permanently established in the dramatic departments of our leading universities; why at least a few of the greater ones — Harvard, Columbia, Chicago — have not recognized the obligation. Certainly the art has come to a pass where the consideration of educational facilities for our young men and women of ability — even genius — can no longer be ignored. Much promising material would in no other way be discovered than by the encouragement of our educational institutions.

It has been the aim of the author to adapt this book to college use by a graded series of exercises, beginning with analysis and proceeding to creative writing. These have been only in part based on the synopses and continuity printed in the book. Judicious substitution may be employed in the subject-matter of these exercises without impairing their effectiveness.

This book is frankly intended for the intelligent aspirant with latent ability. The psychological tests of Chapter 1 are intended to reveal to the incompetents the extent of their inability, or, at least, to raise a serious doubt of their capacity to succeed. They are aimed to prevent, if possible, wasted time and effort in an art unpromising to those who want for dramatic talent.

Effort has been made to acknowledge the sources from which, in a work of this kind, much of the

inspiration must be drawn. It seems pertinent to add that no existing work on the writing of photoplays, except the author's, has furnished any of the material used in this book. To those not specifically mentioned who may have in any manner aided or contributed to this work, the author extends his gratitude.

The proof of the pudding lies in the eating; and to that proof the author now consigns this book, hopeful that it will find its way to the bookshelves for which it is intended.

HOWARD T. DIMICK

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

BOOK ONE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The rise of the photoplay in the past decade to the position of an individual ART — related to the drama in structure but unique upon its pictorial side — was foreseen by those who followed its mutations from the period of inception. From the point of view of the screen author the change in attitude of those who control the industry toward the contributor of screenable stories has undergone a complete cycle, ranging from the day of borrowed material, rehashed from standard literature by some studio hireling, to the day of the original photoplay written directly for the screen by an author whose importance is recognized. No other allied art can cite a growth more revolutional, although no other allied art exhibited in its early history a greater contempt for the author and his stock in trade.

There were those who foresaw this change presaged in the years when "ideas" were desired by the producing companies, when the sum of twenty dollars was regarded as fair return for an "idea;" and we watched the flickering variations through the period when the star was considered

TO WIN
ANGELUS

the principal attraction and the story secondary, when the adaptation from standard or current literature was blazoned forth with the name of a director as the chief advertising appeal, confident that the name of the author would one day take its proper place in the industry, and the industry thereby become an art.

That such premonitions were not without foundation is rapidly being established. The era of the screen author, whose profession is the creation of stories in dramatic form for the camera, is beginning; and the author's remuneration is coming to rank with that of other important arts. The adaptation is by no means extinct, nor will it be while literature holds out material worth transforming into the medium of screen drama, yet the preparation of adaptations is now the recognized work of still another class of recognized screen authors — the continuity writers or dramaturgists proper, who correspond to the adapting dramatists of the stage. It is not a far cry back to the days when there were no continuity writers in the modern sense, and when those there were whose craft was not above that of the office-help or the "extras."

Perhaps the most important single mutation of the new art is the gradual change in attitude toward the FORM in which the independent author is required to submit his story. The era of "ideas" was succeeded by the era in which the producers demanded the "scenario" or continuity; and this era may be called the era of smug incompetence, for the selection of scenarios fell into the hands of people as little fitted by education (if they could claim any!) and ability to judge the merits of

proffered plays as well could be imagined. And in practically no instance was any chosen scenario produced as written by its author.

Numerous books there were rushed to the publishers which purported to unfold the art and business of scenario writing, most of which ignored the dramatic side altogether and laid undue stress upon the photographic and mechanical elements. Many were the reasons given for rejection of meritorious stories — when reasons were offered — and confusing were these reasons when analyzed; perhaps the star objected to portions of the story, perhaps expense prohibited acceptance, or maybe the producer's equipment was unsuited to do a certain thing in any but a certain manner unknown to the outsider. The cry was raised that there were few "gifted enough" to write scenarios properly, and the assertion was even made that, among our hundred million or more population, there were not a hundred persons with "play-writing ability."

Time, as in all things, has sifted the falsehood and misconception from this farrago of cross-purposes and incompetent control. Time has shown that there are many persons, a comparatively large proportion, with dramatic ability of the type able to recognize and outline effective photoplays and, when introduced to the DRAMATIC form and pictorial limitations and requirements, to express their conceptions either by the scenario or in a medium available to the producers. It has shown that the so-called "gift" of the scenarist, tightly clutched to the breasts of the fifth-grade morons who formerly presided over authorial destinies in the industry, is not confined to

the few; there are many who possess the training to write a scenario worthy of production as written, but there are no producers equipped for the indiscriminate production, as written, of such scenarios. The outsider cannot know the conditions controlling the personnel or equipment of a given producer; he must write in that form readily adapted to the producers in general. Thus the period of the scenario has expired unmourned. The independent author of the modern era employs the medium best suited to relationship with many producers.

The modern photoplaywright submits his story in the form of the DETAILED SYNOPSIS, a synopsis amounting in length to a short-story, cast in the dramatic form, establishing the events, developing the characters, introducing the atmosphere, but minus all dialogue and moralizing not pertinent to the pictorial demands of the MECHANISM it is intended for, the CAMERA. Thus, the present period might be called the era of the detailed synopsis, which has evolved out of the era of the scenario. It offers to the author of ability the same opportunity to do effective dramatic composition as formerly was offered him, but now in a form unhampering to him who may be only indifferently effective in continuity. In other words, the author is permitted the freedom essential to convey his story in its entirety, leaving to another of the brotherhood, the continuity writer, its translation into scenario form.

Nor is the author of the synopsis any less a photoplaywright thereby; for we shall see that the detailed synopsis is a dramatic form distinct from the short-story or other narrative types,

perhaps more closely related to the stage drama than to any other allied art, and conceived as a drama to be played by actors and reproduced upon the screen. The creator of such a story is a playwright in the meaning of the term; he is the analogue of the stage dramatist whose play must have the aid of a "doctor" or dramaturgist to fit it to its medium. That he may or may not be able to supply continuity acceptably for his work does not invalidate his title; he is a collaborator with the continuity writer.

In the modern photoplay world, then, playwriting may be divided into two branches or variations, synopses and continuities. To those best fitted to originate and develop plots and details, the synopsis is the suited branch; to those who may evince a talent for that technical and dramaturgical structure, the scenario, continuity is best adapted. It cannot be too strongly asserted, however, that the author of the plot is a playwright in the true sense. The failure of famous novelists and story writers to master the dramatic art of the photoplay is well known, for not every author has dramatic ability anymore than every dramatist has literary ability. A certain innate type of mind is required, a dormant faculty which yields readily to development. Without this type of mind training will have but little avail; training cannot but be a poor substitute for mentality.

There has been of late marked effort to discover those of playwriting ability or dramatic faculty by the method of the questionnaire. This psychological test has been applied to the choice of writers for both the stage and screen. Stripped of malpractice and fraud it may serve as an index

to the faculties now known to be demanded of the playwright, i. e., power of analysis, recognition of the dramatic, and the CREATIVE faculty. To him who thinks seriously of the profession of screen authorship, therefore, it shall not be amiss to suggest some test by which he may even if faintly measure his fitness for the work. Questionnaires are, in most instances, mere memory tests or tests of special knowledge. They do not ordinarily test faculties. But faculties may be tested. They may be indicated by the ease or readiness with which the mind grapples with a problem or exercise presented to it; the greater the training in any direction the greater the ease of solving particular problems; but if the problem demands the labors of the creative faculty, training will not supply a lack of the faculty itself. Therefore, I suggest that the reader undertake the subjoined tests for his own enlightenment ere he set his heart on dramatic authorship.

TEST 1. (1) A bank forger who presents a fraudulent draft at the windows of a suburban bank is suspected by a quick-witted woman employee who consults a printed description of him sent to the bank by a national association; and after being pursued for several blocks by the police he is overcome after a struggle and taken to jail.

(2) In court the man, whose lawyer has advised him to shave his beard in order to make his identification difficult, is recognized by the girl as her father, whose whereabouts have been unknown for years.

Ask yourself the following questions, the answers to which should come readily, regarding the two preceding paragraphs:

1. Is the first paragraph dramatic, that is, are the discovery and pursuit dramatic?

2. What portion of the events is the climax or point of main interest and surprise in either paragraph?

3. What details given in both paragraphs are irrelevant, or could be dispensed with and leave the remainder unchanged?

4. Can you suggest a termination to the final paragraph which shall not be tragic for the daughter and shall yet have an ORIGINAL twist or development?

The first test is largely analytical and calls for dramatic recognition or perception. In test two we shall have two creative exercises.

TEST 2. (1) A wigmaker, who ships many wigs on order to his son in a distant city, and whose son exercises a mysterious influence in his affairs, visits the city and upon the invitation of this son attends a spiritualistic seance. There he recognizes one of his wigs upon the head of a "deceased" person summoned by the medium to communicate with relatives who are present. The wigmaker escapes from the seance and returning to his home disposes of his affairs at once and leaves for unknown destinations.

(2) A young bandit of the primitive West has religious leanings despite his profession. In a railway hold-up staged by him he is surprised by the Sheriff, who pursues him. He takes refuge in the home of a girl whom he loves and who loves him, and she shields him from the Sheriff, who is unable to prove his identity. The Sheriff also loves the girl and plans to trap the bandits and his rival. The young bandit, after aiding the girl's father to pay off a gambling debt, swears to the girl that he will "go straight," but he is later persuaded to take part in the robbery of a bank at which his companions are killed and he is captured by the Sheriff. In prison his religious bent develops, and his good work in reforming hardened criminals and preventing their revolt and attempt to escape leads to his release to marry the girl who waits for him.

Solve the following exercises based upon the two paragraphs of the creative test:

1. Invent a plot to explain the origin and methods of the spiritualistic fraud and to account for the hurried departure of the wigmaker when he discovers it.

2. Can you invent more novel incidents or improve upon the originality of the second paragraph?

3. Can you supply an ending which shall be as effective but not so stereotyped as that of the bandit's prison career?

4. Does the novelty of the first paragraph stimulate your inventive powers?

If, after deliberation and experiment, you are unable to outline a story on the first creative paragraph, so as to explain the situation and link a complete series of events together plausibly and dramatically, your creative or inventive powers are dwarfed or lacking.

If you cannot think out a more novel set of incidents or offer a more original climax for the second paragraph, your originality may be submerged or you may lack it.

If the paragraphs of Test One cannot be solved easily, your powers of analysis are weak or you lack dramatic recognition. If you are unable to make headway against these tests, but are overwhelmed by them and disinclined to undertake the problems presented to you, it is well to consider the possibility of failure should you attempt to write photoplays. These problems are not essentially different from those which will be encountered in the writing of any original photoplay. They involve the same mental processes and the same faculties. Failure at one is an indication of failure at the other.

If, on the other hand, you find that you quickly see the distinctions lurking in the analytical questions; that you can solve the creative tests with a fair degree of skill; that you are urged on by your patent weaknesses to improvement, even though improvement requires hard work and numerous revisions; then you may safely count upon a fair measure of success in the work, provided that you are willing to study and dramatize

until you have developed your awakening faculties and acquired the necessary mastery of dramatic technique.

NOTE — The copyright of this book protects the material of these tests against improper usage; writers must not use them as the ideas for plots.

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER II

TECHNIQUE: THE TOOLS OF THE DRAMATIST

A few years ago it was fashionable in dramatic circles to denounce, decry or deny the existence of technique, according to mood or makeup of the unbeliever. Each person to the controversy held firm views and, to his own satisfaction, proved his case. But after all was said, sifting of the arguments revealed that it was not technique with which fault was found, or whose efficacy was denied, but CONVENTION. Convention is quite another thing, as will be shown; convention changes with the mechanisms that bring it into being; but technique remains as constant as human nature or the laws of the mind. The true relationship of convention to the photoplay art will be indicated presently. First, we should understand what is meant by technique.

In every art there is an assemblage of principles or criteria — rules and regulations you may call them — employed by artists in the practice of that art. Their usefulness consists in the mastery which they give an artist over his raw or unshaped material. Such principles have originated from the experiences of many original artists who have sought to create, form or fashion some particular effect or result from the raw material of their art.

Applied to the photoplay these principles may be regarded as a convenient catalogue of the methods — both dramatic and pictorial — used by successful photoplaywrights, and disclosed one at the time for the systematic instruction of those who, if left to learn them by experience, would consume years of time and might, even then, fail to grasp them all. Again, we may regard technique as the tools with which a play is built; each of its principles of structure or delineation serves a purpose or has a function in the construction of the play.

The necessity for a technique of the photoplay rests in the **FORM** of the art. All literary products, as is well known, are written to produce certain impressions or effects on the reader; each branch of the art has a form best suited to effects of a kind; the form governs the effects, the effects the technique. Adverting to the photoplay, we know that it is written to create a **DRAMATIC** impression or effect. This general impression is the sum total of the series of lesser impressions, each of which is contributed by a section or segment of the whole play. Thus, each **SCENE** of a photoplay contributes its single impression or effect, and the composite result of all of them is the dramatic impression made by the play.

Technique finds its place in the manipulation of the story and details so as to lead to this dramatic impression in two ways:

First, — It controls the number and kind of scenes to be used in developing the story, and the effect to be made by each of the scenes according to that part of the story which it pictorializes.

Second, — Technique governs the **POSITION** of

each scene with reference to the others, so that they follow each other in a sequence carefully arranged to lead to the larger dramatic impression intended.

An unskilled author, lacking technical adroitness, either employs too many scenes or too few; some of his scenes fail to produce the effect he strove for, others overdo the effect and anticipate a part of his story; when he attempts to put his scenes together into a complete photoplay, his troubles multiply. He cannot get them together in the right order; they will not maintain the suspense or converge to the climax, gathering up all the loose strands of the story and resolving all the doubts and desires of the spectators to a satisfactory close. Although such a writer may scoff at technique, he cannot write effectively without it.

The unskilled author confuses conventions with technique. He fancies that because he calls for "close-ups," or the like, in his scenario he is writing effectively; or he imagines that because his synopsis describes interiors or exteriors in which action takes place he is a dramatist. Such matters are purely conventional — not technical. All photoplays are written for a camera; the type, scope and limitations of this mechanism make certain conventions necessary. For example, the "fade in," used to introduce the "thoughts" or "mental processes" of a character in a photoplay, is a CONVENTION. It is necessary because the camera has none but such conventional means of representing such a detail, anymore than the stage drama can represent the private thoughts of a character except by an "aside." If the camera could be so improved as to extend its

functions, this convention would be replaced by others; but bear in mind that, in the changing of these conventions imposed by any mechanism, the true technique of the art remains substantially unchanged. Its underlying principles, based largely on the laws of the mind and how to appeal to that mind, change no more than does the mind at which they aim. The unskilled author easily masters the superficial matters of convention, but he remains in the would-be class until he masters technique — another matter.

To put the subject in a somewhat different light, presume that the author is expert or skilled. His play begins in his mentality and his problem is to EXTERNALIZE it in the dramatic form. His mental images must be translated into written images and thence to pictorial images on a screen. This process demands every iota of technical knowledge and ability he may possess; for he must shape and form his mental pictures and put them together in the delimiting form of his art, with allowance for the conventions or mechanical peculiarities of that art. Technique in his case enables him to create the scenes best adapted to carry out his ideas, to control the effect produced by each scene or portion of the story and to arrive, when the scenes have been put together, at exactly the dramatic impression he set out to reach. Only technique in the true sense can achieve such results; conventions cannot attain them.

Somewhere along in this chapter the reader may have asked himself: Since the modern photoplaywright is no longer required to supply a scenario, why all this verbiage over scenes and

their management? A synopsis being written in the story form, why not deal with it as such?

This reasoning is fallacious, however, and cannot be too quickly corrected. In the era of the scenario it was customary for an author to complete his scenario before writing the brief synopsis which accompanied it. The purpose was to enable the scenario to set the dramatic form, after which the synopsis was written from the scenario and could not depart from the dramatic line of development. Today in the era of the detailed synopsis the same method of work holds good on a modified scale. For, since the synopsis is a dramatic form in photoplay writing, it should follow the dramatic line of development. In order to insure that this line of development shall not be departed from essentially, the modern free-lance author often uses a WORKING or basic-continuity as a guide, from which he develops the detailed synopsis. If he writes directly from memory, he holds clearly in mind the continuity from which he outlines the story in the synopsis. And this is only another way of saying that practically the same technical demands are made upon the writer of dramatic synopses as upon the scenario writer. Use of a basic or working continuity is recommended for the beginner.

All this is proof that the modern photoplay author is still a playwright, using a playwright's methods and indebted to a playwright's technique for success. In the chapters to follow, therefore, the principles of dramatic and pictorial construction are discussed from the playwright's point of view and applied to the composition of stories with the dramatic line of development.

What dramatic development is will be shown in this book. It should be obvious that, if the reader seriously intends to write synopses for production, he should understand the fundamentals of scenario writing and continuities. It may be necessary upon occasion to supply continuity to a synopsis; and the bungler will come to grief. The author need not be so expert as his continuity-writing confrere of the studio; but both need an understanding of the same elemental principles of construction.

The mere story is not acceptable to producers because it is not PRODUCIBLE. Before the mere story can be screened a scenario must be made of it, and before this can be done it must be recast into dramatic form — rewritten. Note that the relationship of synopsis to continuity is that of events or potential scenes arranged in dramatic order. The detailed synopsis stands between continuity; it is based upon and intended for continuity.

Mastery of technique may be acquired through the principles given in this book; but the mere reading of the various chapters cannot make an expert technician. Mere knowledge is not enough; the practice of an art demands skill in action, dexterity in application. In order to acquire the ability requisite for successful work, the principles should be understood and fixed in memory. As each principle is learned, the theatre should be visited and a note made of any examples of that principle illustrated on the screen. Analysis of this sort should become a habit, and the recognition of the technical features of current releases should become automatic. Concurrently with the

analytical study, actual writing may be taken up, beginning with the writing of plots and extending, first, to continuities and thence to synopses in detail.

By this course of study a systematic and vivid mental background is added to the mind; the acquisition of technique is sure because it is properly cultivated; mastery comes by accretion, adding bit to bit, not all in one portion. Such training is systematic and enables the possessor to compete on somewhat equal ground with the experienced author. The unsystematically trained man cannot hope to compete with his stronger brother; it is like a man attempting to practice a profession after reading a few magazine articles on the subject or after wading through a book. All the so-called successes of this kind are momentary and almost never endure in the fierce competition of modern industry. A person with a slipshod and fragmentary knowledge of photoplay writing is not trained, he is merely DELUDED.

Technique cannot be mastered in a hurry; make haste leisurely. The commonplace story form is so convenient and familiar to most writers that they are wont to drop back into it unawares. The dramatic form is not ordinarily used in literature, hence, it is difficult and unnatural when first attempted. If the study methods suggested are followed rigidly, the point shall be reached where the author learns to THINK dramatically, to use a new language of externalization. At that point mastery is attained. Finally, all one's ideas come in dramatic order, ready for synopsis or continuity. At this stage the working scenario or continuity may be discarded, if desired, and the

author write directly from mind, keeping vividly in the mind's eye the dramatic continuity which controls his story.

Most successful photoplaywrights are masters of continuity and, naturally, have it in mind while writing. That they do not employ a working scenario from which to frame the synopsis in detail, does not invalidate the principle that they work from continuity, for they THINK in continuity. The beginner had best adopt the suggestion given him and learn to think dramatically or even in scenes (continuity). He should reflect that tales of success counter to these suggestions prove nothing in HIS case. The fact that the mere (undramatic) stories of some famous writer are refashioned and improved upon in the studio does not signify that the "hogwash" of J. Slumgullion Jones shall meet with the same treatment. There is the difference of fame and possible genius between them; and I am far from denying to fame its privileges or to genius its superiority.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. Is the photoplay method of reproducing the thoughts of a character pictorially part of the technique or is it convention? Why so?
2. Is convention as important as technique? If so, why?
3. Is technique a mere set of rules of what to do and what not to do, or is it a process of thought to be applied with individual judgment?
4. Can genius do without technique, or can technique dispense with genius? Why not?

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

Chapter III

Dramatic Material, and the Three Problems of a Play

The chief consideration of an author, whether fictionist or scenarist, is the material with which he works. This is so because it is the material which must be shaped, given form and dramatic effect, through the technique of an art. Apart from material that lends itself to dramatic treatment, the most thorough technique of the screen dramatist is useless; it must have the thing to work on before it can function.

It is not, therefore, a waste to time to consider material from the angles of origin, type, and the problems arising from it; for there are three outstanding problems to be solved in the creation of any dramatic story. We may call them, respectively, the moral problem, the aesthetic or artistic problem and the technical problem. All of them arise in a play, unless it be a comedy or farce, aimed only at arousing laughter. They shall be returned to and defined after examination has been made of the origin and type of material.

Material may be defined as everything in a drama or comedy. The material of any photoplay is each and every fact, detail, incident, character, motive, setting, locale or change of

atmosphere which may be combined with the others to make the story in all its parts, — plot, characterization and action. From this definition the inference is clear that a synoptical story has for material everything from the title to the action described by it; if the story has a continuity form the material embraces all divisions from the title to the detailed scenes of action. There is no difference between the material of synoptical and continuity stories except that, in the latter, the material is more elaborated and detailed. In the synopsis, "Moths and Candles," given in this book, the material includes the title, the characters, and each and every event and detail described in the story; motives, purposes, cross-purposes, atmosphere — everything.

Not all material is dramatic material. Material, after an author becomes experienced, has a way of presenting itself to his mind as suited to be developed in a certain form, perhaps as a play, perhaps as a short-story or novel. To a beginner the form it is best adapted to take may not be apparent. It may be asserted, however, that the man or woman who must be informed as to what constitutes likely material, where to seek it, and the like, is not of that turn of mind to achieve successful photoplay authorship. Such a person is too given to poring over the thirty-six fundamental types of dramatic situation or searching the plot catalogues for something that can be given a new dress and sent the rounds of the producers. And yet despite the publications for jaded authors, material is often selected which might better have been developed along some other line of creative art.

That material which is specifically dramatic, as contrasted with the specifically narrative or fiction forms, is of the type which moves swiftly or directly in one direction through a series of mutually dependent and mutually related incidents or events, involving characters drawn into the events whose motives and purposes cross and clash, who struggle to overcome some obstacle or impediment, to solve some tangle, and in which the interest and suspense converge and heighten toward a pinnacle called the climax, falling away from this to a satisfactory and definite close. In addition, the screen drama demands pictorial features. A story about the mere mental conflicts of characters, their abstract feelings and emotions, may be dramatic, but it is not suited to pictorial drama. Something concrete, objective, atmospheric and external is demanded by the pictorial form.

It may require considerable elucidation in the chapters to follow before the hidden meaning of the foregoing definition can be brought out vividly; for it may seem that this definition applies as readily to the novel or short-story as to the drama of the film. The difference will be found mainly in the closer, swifter, more compact, critical and suspense-making nature of the dramatic as distinct from the mere story form.

A few years ago the textbooks written for the beginning photoplaywright, as well as the numerous departments conducted in the trade-journals, wasted much time enumerating what to write and what to avoid writing, when and where to get ideas or inspirations for photoplays; in itemizing the so-called sources of dramatic material

and in dogmatizing over the origin and extent of inspirations. Indeed, little light may be thrown upon this matter for those who have no ideas, have never had a dramatic inspiration. Moreover, since the sources of dramatic material are limited only by the human mind and an individual's opportunities for observation and experience, for emotion, for laughter and anguish, it signifies nothing how the inspiration is received, when or from what source; but it matters greatly how well its problems are solved and what the worth of it is when viewed as a photoplay.

The original idea may have come from a newspaper headline, from an experience, from life or from imagination; it may have presented itself as a title, as a striking event, as a few interesting and dynamic characters, as both characters and incidents interwoven, as a great moral lesson illustrated in some happening. The test is, what can be done with it, made of it; what significance or object has it — not whence it came or how. Too many persons subject possible material to no test whatever. They often begin with the abstract desire to write a photoplay — anything — but without any notion as to what the play shall be or what significance it shall have. That may account for the innumerable "trashy" or objectless melodramas thrown upon the screen during the past decade. The creation of a significant story of the dramatic type, the interweaving of characters and events according to dramatic design, is the result of inspiration and spontaneity — not of the cold-blooded determination to "write a play" regardless. If one's playwriting desires begin with the abstract determination to

write something — anything — it would be advisable to suppress the desire and await an inspiration. This advice is all the more timely when one considers that the standard of originality and effectiveness demanded from the hardworking staff-writer is often allowedly much lower than that which is acceptable from the outsider, the independent author. The staff-man is on the payroll; he is expected to keep busy.

No sooner does inspiration present to an author material adapted to dramatic representation than the three problems heretofore mentioned arise for solution. Let us now define these problems.

THE MORAL PROBLEM. This may be defined as the object or significance of a play, the lesson, point, moral, spirit or appeal conveyed by the drama to the spectator. The word "moral" as used here does not mean merely the ethical force of a play; it is extra-ethical or trans-ethical.

THE AESTHETIC PROBLEM. This is the artistic value of the events, not merely as pictures or photographic creations, but from the vantage of taste. It arises whenever the events of a story must develop some moral significance which might be offensive to the spectator if bungled or carelessly handled. Thus, in "Mme. X," the famous melodrama, the sordid life and degenerate character of the mother might easily be made offensive, robbing the moral significance of the play of its appeal. Skilful solution of the aesthetic element of the play prevented this effect. Wherever a play, which has latent in its material a great moral idea, is repulsive or offensive because of the manner in which the material is

developed, the fault lies with failure to solve the aesthetic problem.

THE TECHNICAL PROBLEM. This is the problem of structure and dramatic effectiveness of the story, the problem of technique. The following chapters will unfold its various characteristics at length. It arises in all material.

In every screen drama, melodrama or comedy-drama, these three problems press for solution. In the farce comedy, there is no moral problem, since the object is merely to amuse or arouse laughter. The lemon-pie and the slap-stick do not lend themselves to significant material; the runaway Ford, which obediently stops when "whoa" is bellowed at it, is not a moral object albeit ridiculous enough to please the lowest mind. But the drama proper demands a three-fold development to solve its three-fold problem, giving to the moral object the chief place and controlling importance. There is no hard and fast line of delimitation between the three problems; they overlap and are related. Where one ends and the others begin is not sharply marked off; but the solving of the major or moral problem goes a great way toward solving the other two. This moral object may suggest itself in the material of the original inspiration, especially if the material be truly dramatic; but, if it is not at first apparent, the author must find it, or write a play without a guide post or an identification mark. And the aimless play cannot have the force and appeal which lie solely in the moral problem of the material.

No preachment, sermon, academic instruction or cant should be understood in the term "moral"

as here used. As was hinted, it transcends mere ethical considerations; for mere ethics might consign such a play as "Mme. X" to the limbo of the immoral. No drama ever had a greater moral problem than "Hamlet," with which most persons are familiar. Its lesson is the folly and sin of passion; it illustrates the extreme old age of human nature; and yet as an auditor or spectator one does not realize that there is a sermon or preachment involved. After the play, reflection may disclose the moral side, but, for the moment, "the play's the thing." And this illustrates that the moral problem has been solved; it brings home its object without obtruding it into the suspense or interest aroused.

In the detailed synopsis, "Moths and Candles," the moral object or significance is the message that the only true happiness of women in this world is from the love inspired in good men. Ambitions may beckon but they cannot substitute for the law of life which nature imposes on human beings.

There are in this story latent opportunities for other moral objects. For example, one might select the tragedy of the schools which pass so much human material through their channels and produce so many failures — waste. But the events manifest clearly which problem has been selected, for they are chosen and put together to develop that problem and that alone. Were the schools uppermost in significance, the events would be obliged to take a new direction to emphasize them and bring out their influence on the play. The same course of events could not illustrate another and different problem. But

we observe that the schools are secondary to the main problem. The first important fact is the failure, anticipated, of Maribelle, whose ambition is shattered, and her marriage and subsequent happiness as a wife. This points the direction to be taken by the moral side of the drama. Then we observe that Anne succeeds at her studies and establishes herself in her chosen art; but it does not bring her the happiness she may have anticipated. She still loves Arthur; her self-proposed bargain smites her. She has sold herself for art! This is the second step toward the problem. When Anne renounces the stage, dismissing George, the problem is completed; the events have identified themselves unmistakably with one problem, one philosophy, one pervading significance.

The artistic problem of the synopsis was to choose and combine the incidents and characters without offending taste; for George easily might become a repulsive unreality of clap-trap melodrama, while Anne might, similarly, be let to slip into that class of dramatic puppets which resembles nothing so much as the dummy in a show-window. The technical problem was covered by these two problems, i. e., moral and artistic. Once solved they, in turn, solved the technical questions.

Nothing can replace independent analysis on the part of the student. There is no better practice than finding the moral problems of current photoplays. If no object or moral significance can be found, do not be disconcerted. It has long been admitted in intelligent circles that too many photoplays are aimless, insignif-

icant, purposeless and inane beyond words; and this fact has led to wholesale condemnation of the "movies" as an art. But an awakened public is demanding its money's worth at the theatres. The screen author must now have a philosophy of life, a purpose beyond mere photography; he shall have to convey a significance worthy of the name of art and drama, if he would hold the public interest. No more searching question can be put to the ambitious beginner than that which concerns his message, his aim. The true dramatist always has something to convey, to prove.

Test Exercise

"The Devil's Pass-key" (Universal) had the following principal complications:

A wealthy attache of our French diplomatic service, in his ceaseless pursuit of women, is introduced by a modiste to the plight of a pretty American woman, wife of a struggling author,. who owes the modiste a bill she cannot pay. Finding the lady distressed but innocent of low motives, he offers to pay her bill anyway but is refused. However, he secures a receipt for the unpaid account and outwits a blackmail plot. But the affair finds its way into one of those scandal publications which besmirch fair names, and it is selected by the woman's husband as the central idea of a play he writes. After the play is staged, he discovers that he has written his own wife's episode into his play. (The moral problem here is essentially one of melodrama and not of the highest order nor the most desirable.)

1. Regard this outline as the main material of the play and give its moral problem. Is further development necessary to bring this problem clearly to light?

2. By way of an aesthetic problem, suggest an ending to this outline which shall not be violent or repulsive but which shall complete the play and satisfy the spectator.

3. What is the moral problem of the continuity given in this book? Is there any especial artistic problem in the development of its events? If so, point it out.

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER IV

THE FORMULA IN PLAYWRITING

That point has now been reached where the principles of photoplay construction may be taken up and our solution of the technical problem present in every story for the screen begun. These principles begin with the less obvious and proceed to those which are evident on the surface of any synopsis or scenario. It should be held clearly in mind that each principle is a tool to be used in putting a photoplay together, or in shaping the material of the story into dramatic form. None of them is independent of the others, but each has an organic relation to the others and to the photoplay. This will become clearer, if we consider that the parts of any dramatic story, its plot, events, scenes, are organs, each of which serves a purpose or has a function in the whole. The principles are related to the organs in that some of them apply particularly to one organ, such as plot, and others to another organ, such as the action, or to a particular kind of scene. Both the continuity and synopsis have the dramatic organs, their difference being only in the form of DRAMATIC DESCRIPTION, — whether scenario or synoptical narrative. The same events occur in both; many of the same details are included in each; the final effect of both is the same, save that it is more acute in the scenario.

The fundamentally controlling principle of all photoplays, dramas or comedies, is a basic or specific unit called the **FORMULA**. It may be compared to a mathematical formula, since it is specific, complete, self-containing and conduces to one and only one dramatic result or end.

THE FORMULA

In mathematics a formula is the simplest statement of a complete mathematical action or process. For example, take the formula

$$F = \frac{CE}{P}$$

This is the simplest way of stating the complete proposition that the result, F, will be found by multiplying C times E and dividing by P. Thus, C, E and P represent the three factors or conditions of the problem; the three make up all the essential elements for the solution, F. They may be called the **TERMS** of the formula. The result springs from the terms.

Adverting to dramatic structure, analysis will show that every complete **DRAMATIC** action or process, every photoplay, has a similar formula, the simplest statement or the complete basic unit of the story, containing all the elements or terms from which the result flows. This notion of reducing a play to its lowest terms has been known to stage dramatists for a number of years. It was first formulated by W. T. Price,* the well-known play "doctor" and dramatic author, who gives the following definition of it under the name of **PROPOSITION**:

*Analysis of Play Construction, 1908.

"The proposition of a play is the briefest statement of the complete action, with its beginning, middle and end, the conditions of the action, the cause of the action, and the result of the action."

This definition coincides closely with what is called the formula in this book, with some differentiation which will not bother the reader. Attention may be directed at this point to the fact that a complete "action," in the sense in which "action" is used for our purposes, is not essential to the formulation of this statement or its terms. All that is necessary can be seen in the three terms now to be defined.

The Three Terms of the Formula

The photoplay formula has three terms which may be called:

(a) The CRITICAL CONDITIONS beginning the play.

(b) The EXCITANT, or acting dramatic force.

(c) The RESULT, caused by the introduction of the excitant into the critical conditions or circumstances.

The critical conditions are those definite events and characters underlying or preluding the story which need only the application of some particular excitant to begin a dramatic movement toward a certain dramatic result.

The excitant is that definite occurrence, incident, motive, decision, change of relations or cause which, when thrown among the critical conditions, sets the resultant events in motion, produces the action, brings about the play.

The result is the whole series of incidents or

happenings, changes of relationship among the characters, surprises and crises, climax and closure, which follows the excitant. It is the play.

Observe, then, that the formula of a photoplay is definite and exact and produces a certain result. It is not the "theme" of the story, not the inspiration or original idea, not the plot nor the action; it is a thing to itself, controlling the plot and details, fundamental and comprehensive. Thus, the theme of a photoplay might be "courage," but this is not a formula, since it is indefinite and has no terms. Any number of different plays might be written around this theme; but a formula applies to but ONE play and causes but one set of events or one result. If a certain plot be written to the theme "courage," that plot may be reduced to one formula; and no different play about courage could be developed from that formula. Another and different play would require another formula with new terms. For the three terms make the issue clear and prevent mutations. On the other hand, from the theme "courage" any number of divergent formulas might be evolved, each having its three own terms.

To render this clearer, examine the story of the synopsis, "Moths and Candles." The theme of this play could be called love versus ambition, or moths and candles; but these are not the formula. The formula is this:

Anne Cavendis who loves and is loved by Arthur Renwick has ambition, which has been inflamed by the artful encouragement of George Sylvester. She must choose between love and ambition. She chooses ambition. What shall be the result of this choice; shall it bring success

and happiness or shall she regret the decision, and, if so, shall it be too late to reconsider?

Certain it is at a glance that this is not the theme of the story, not the plot nor action, not the moral problem, in fact, nothing else but itself —the formula. Its terms are complete. The critical conditions lie in the state of Anne's mind, in the little, sleepy town where she lives, in the opposing forces of love and visions, in the inciting presence of George Sylvester, who has returned from New York. Into this hair-trigger situation the excitant is introduced, i. e., the timely arrival of George as Anne is wavering between love and the lure of a career. George's presence forces Anne's decision and sets in motion the events which shall produce the play; for if Anne had chosen otherwise a different series of happenings would have been the result. The plot of the story will flow from the excitant to the climax and close; it will be guided and directed by the formula; every scene and detail will be referred to it directly or indirectly. With this formula as a foundation the construction of any photoplay becomes definite and sure. Without it there would be no story in dramatic form.

If the reader has not already observed that the moral problem is directly related to the formula, he may now consider that fact. The formula is definite, the moral problem is general and between them there are two processes of thought, but they are related. As soon as the material begins to pass from the original idea to a definite idea, to take shape and direction, the formula and moral problem appear. The formula demands a process of reasoning from the general to the particu-

lar, called in logic deduction. Thus, we proceed from a general idea to a definite unit with three terms. This is or should be the author's first aim, his goal. After he has reduced the material to formula, he knows what his play will be about, he controls it.

The next logical step will be inductive, from the particular to the general; from a formula to a general philosophy or significance. He will now pass from the formula to the moral problem. His events will be arranged to develop a plot and demonstrate a moral; the plot will be exact, but the problem will be general.

Thus, in the synopsis, the formula just stated passes into the general moral problem that only the love of good men yields to women their true happiness. This is specific in itself and set off from other moral problems, but it is not a formula and has no terms, no excitant.

A formula is necessary to the construction of any photoplay worthy of notice. The formula saves the time and labor of experienced scenarists, who know the technical essentials of playwriting and how to use the least effort to secure a certain result. Aimless, ineffective, insignificant and undramatic stories may be based upon no formula, no controlling unit of plot and action; but to create dramatic stories, to write above the plane of the eighth grade, to meet the higher standard of the new era, to earn the increased remuneration of the modern synoptist, a formula is a technical necessity. That a formula need not always be expressed in writing is no proof that it is absent from an author's mind. Experienced scenarists may dispense with the written formula,

but they do not dispense with a mental formula; they are not absolved from THINKING. Ineffective stories still are shown on the screen, but failure of the public to patronize the films is an automatic regulator of standards and stimulator of merit. The modern author must meet the demand and grow with the standards.

The most beneficial habit a beginner can establish will be the reduction of his inspiration to formula. He can tell with unerring accuracy whether or not he has a play by attempting to find its formula, its three terms. If there is a missing term, if he find duplication of terms, such as two excitants where one is sufficient, if the material for any reason cannot be reduced to terms, it is NOT dramatic material, no matter how much like a "story" it may sound.

Formula is the novice's safeguard against writing undramatic, incoherent, formless and aimless stories, perhaps under the rather common delusion that he is dramatizing. He may be uselessly wearing out a typewriter. Formula is his check and counter-check upon the material of the story. But there is a rough and uncharted road to success for those who imagine that genius so-called needs no formula, no guide-post; that genius is dispensed from the effort demanded of "common minds;" that the standards of the screen are still as low as they were in 1914, and that any twaddle which Jeremiah McJeenius, from his lofty mental vantage, sees fit to type and mail, shall be acceptable to the producers, the businessmen whose money is invested!

Test Exercises

1. What is the formula of the continuity given in this book? Reduce it to writing and separate the three terms.
2. Write the formula of each creative test in Chapter One (Test Two), pointing out the excitants.
3. Construct, if you can, a set of critical conditions into which the introduction of a dramatic excitant leads to no changes of any kind. Be sure that you have an excitant.
4. Can a play have two excitants or two results? Is its theme the same as its formula?

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER V

PLOT AND PLOTTING

No single principle of play construction has called forth more misleading definitions from the so-called photoplay "authorities" than plot. It has been defined as the "story" of a photoplay, as the "action," or even as the "synopsis." Some have compared it to the plot of the short-story, although a dramatic plot may depart widely from fiction standards.

Plot, be it known, is none of the foregoing. It is a distinct structural organ, having a dramatic function. Until the aspiring scenarist knows exactly what plot is, by realizing clearly what it is NOT, he shall be no playwright. For ambition and imagination cannot supplant the process of thought required in playwriting, as is true of all other intellectual tasks. If a plot can be compared offhand to any commonly known or used device, perhaps it might be called a plan or schematic outline of a play.

W. T. Price,* whose formulation of the principles of playwriting is, perhaps, the most helpful of modern times, has said, speaking of the stage drama:

"The plot is that combination of happenings which demonstrates or solves the proposition (formula)."

*The American Playwright, 1913.

This is equivalent to saying that the plot is the demonstrator or manifestor of a photoplay, driving home by its incidents the objects and philosophy of the author, raising the issues and solving them all, removing all the doubts and quieting the suspense. And examination will show that a good plot demonstrates or proves all the divisions of the story. A plot demonstrates:

(a) The formula, and its three terms.
(b) The moral problem.
(c) The characters and their development.

Changing the above statement about, it may be said that the plot is controlled by the formula and its terms, guided by the moral problem in direction and course, bound up with the characters and circumscribed by their possibilities. It is evident that, if a plot demonstrates these three, it is, in its turn, controlled and directed by them. The dramatic plot must begin with the critical conditions, be influenced by the excitant, and proceed according to the action set in motion by the excitant and held in its course by the moral problem. Thus, a plot is the prime mover of a play; it causes the events to progress, the relations between the characters to change, crisis to follow upon crisis to a climax, and the issues to be satisfied at the close.

A technical definition of plot will be helpful:

A plot is a chain of probable, progressive, self-explanatory and self-propelling events, linked as immediate cause and effect, crucial of import, converging to a climax and resolving the issues to a satisfactory close. This definition contains some meanings not apparent at sight.

The definition presumes PROBABLE events. Those events are probable which would be likely to occur under the conditions set forth in the play.

The events should be progressive, that is, lead to something, move forward, work toward a result. The progression should be dramatic. This will be explained in a later chapter.

The events should be self-explanatory and self-propelling; self-explanatory events contain within themselves and the surrounding details all facts necessary to explain them to the onlookers. In the photoplay this implies that they should be PICTORIALLY explanatory, needing no inserts of text or dialogue leaders to render them understandable. Self-propelling events are those which move of their own accord, because of the latent impulsion and compulsion flowing from the characters and the relationship to other events prior and subsequent.

The events should be linked as immediate cause and effect. We shall see, presently, that all dramatic plots may be stated as a chain of causes and effects, the incidents following one upon the other as consequents follow causes. The causes and effects should be IMMEDIATE, in marked contrast to many of real life, which often are separated by long lapses of time or continents of space. Drawing together or compacting the events is necessary to the UNITY OF EFFECT in a photoplay.

The events should be crucial of import, that is, they should involve issues which arouse suspense in the onlookers. They may, in this light, be compared to crises arising from the issues of the play.

Dramatic events should converge to a climax,

which means that the threads of the story should be gathered up into a point of greatest issue and crisis, of outstanding suspense.

The events resolve to a satisfactory close when they have answered all questions raised in the plot and settled all doubts about the issues at stake, satisfying the spectators.

PLOT FRAMEWORK

Poe has said that a good plot is one from which no single leading incident can be removed without detriment to the whole. In this light, plot is reduced to those events which are leading or dominant, leaving all other incidents to that part of the composition which is often called the ACTION. It may be seen that the following chain of causes and effects taken from the scenario, "Some People's Honor," includes only the dominant incidents. The reader should familiarize himself with the continuity before concluding that this matter is quite clear.

Because her daughter, Helen, is losing interest in society, Mrs. Cabot seeks medical advice.

Because Helen tires of society's butterfly life and her fiance, Duane, she falls in love with the doctor.

Because he is invited to the Cabot home and Helen is interested in him, the doctor arouses Duane's jealousy.

Because of insane jealousy, Duane chicanes to ruin his reputation by causing a newspaper article to be published charging the doctor with violation of the Harrison act.

Because of this, the physician is denied the Cabot home, and Helen's idol lies broken at her feet.

Because of war with Germany, Duane has been registered in the draft with millions of other men.

Because of cowardice, Duane urges Helen to marry him, thinking thus to escape the draft.

Because she is insulted, Helen breaks her engagement to Duane.

Because of her mother's anger at the broken engagement, Helen leaves home and enters a hospital as a nurse.

Because of this chance, she is thrown with the doctor, whom she learns to love again when she finds that he has effected several cures among "dope" victims.

Because this doctor is medical officer of the draft board before whom Duane will be called, Duane attempts to engineer a bribe, thinking the physician a man of "low honor."

Because the doctor thinks that Helen is still engaged to Duane and wishes to open her eyes, he takes the money but tells Duane to call later for an answer.

Because Duane is confident of success, he calls and is arrested by officers concealed in the doctor's office, after he has renewed the bribe-offer in their hearing.

Because of this and the ensuing explanations, Mrs. Cabot consents to the doctor's marriage to Helen.

All dramatic plots can be reduced as above to their causes and effects, whether in synopsis or

continuity form. If we examine these causes and effects carefully, we shall see that many of them begin in the critical conditions; that the excitant directs the action; that the action proves the formula.

William Archer,* who first formulated the dramatic in terms of crisis, has said:

"A play consists of a great crisis worked out through a series of minor crises."

Proof of this is obvious in the causes and effects just outlined. The great crisis is that point where the issues of the doctor's love for Helen and the exposure of Duane shall meet. This result is worked up to by a series of minor crises. In fact, we can translate the causes and effects into statements of crisis, as follows:

> Helen, tired of society, meets a young physician and falls in love with him. What shall be the result? Shall the Cabots accept him as a suitor, and shall Duane oppose the matter?
>
> Shall the intrigue of Duane ruin the doctor and shall Helen believe the lie and cease to love him?
>
> Shall Helen and the doctor meet again and, if so, what shall be the result?

And thus we might go through with the entire chain, giving the parallel issues and crises raised by the events. The reader may finish the plot himself. Incidentally, it is well to point out here that the definition of plot predicates crisis or suspense as one of the fundamentals. A good

*Play Making, 1912.

plot does not permanently relax the suspense until the climax is passed.

Formula Controls Plot

It has been stated that the formula controls the plot. Proof of this may be found by reducing the causes and effects previously given to a formula, with three terms.

Helen Cabot, sick of society and her fiance, falls in love with a doctor. Her fiance is jealous and indulges in a machination to dethrone the doctor in Helen's regard. What shall be the result of this scheme?

Here we have the formula. The critical conditions are evident. The excitant is the intrigue of Duane. It sets the action in motion. The moral problem or significance of this photoplay may be stated as the contrast in honor among men. The physician is presumed by Duane to be a man of low honor because he treats "dope fiends," and yet Duane does not balk at a bribe, thus illustrating some people's sense of honor. We can see that this idea directs the events after the excitant; for Duane must be exposed and his idea of honor contrasted with the doctor's. This moral problem is thus demonstrated by the plot, which is itself controlled by the formula. The events will be found to be self-propelling, once they are begun, as they contain within themselves the necessary impulsion to move the story forward to climax and close.

What a Plot is Not

That a plot, as we have studied it, is not a mere story, may be manifested by selecting

Poe's "Gold-bug" and attempting to reduce it to a chain of causes and effects controlled by a formula of three terms. This tale does not conform to Poe's definition of a plot, as may be discovered.

A plot is not minor detail or action. This can be seen by going over the scenes of the continuity and noting the large amount of detail not directly connected to the main or plot events. Such scenes as "continuity shots" (as they are called in the studio), which get a character from one place to another, are often not direct plot scenes. Scenes such as that in which Helen shows her boredom with social affairs belong to the critical conditions and begin the plot; but such a scene as No. 8 is merely episodic, introducing Duane into the play but not affecting the plot materially. Many minor events merely bring out character or connect up the movement of the play. Each of them has a purpose; but here it is pointed out that they are NOT plot.

In the "Birth of a Nation" the plot as such dealt solely with the affairs of the Cameron and Stoneman families. All historical scenes not directly affecting the affairs of the characters were not of the plot, but were merely episodes introduced for historical atmosphere and thrill. The scenes in Ford's theatre, the burning of Atlanta, these were not plot. Many photoplays contain much pictorial episode introduced for its photographic effect. But such detail is not plot.

Plot is not a synopsis of a play, for, if we examine the synopses in Chapter 24, we find that they contain much detail and many incidents not essential to the main causes and effects. Accord-

ing to Poe's doctrine, these minor details can be removed without detriment to the mass, therefore, they cannot be plot. Any synopsis will include details not essential to the chain of plot events. In "Moths and Candles" such incidents as those at the railway station are episodic and not of the plot; the only fact of importance to the plot is the departure for New York.

Plot Unity

In order to attain to and maintain dramatic effect, a plot demands unity of structure, effective craftsmanship.

The events should be drawn together in time and space at least close enough to present to the onlookers an unmistakable thread of cause and effect. A plot which begins in Russia, skips to India and ends in the United States, which has its critical conditions in 1726 and its climax in 1920, may be dramatic, but it lacks unity of effect. Its events are certain to appear largely episodic, since they are so loosely connected in place, so disjointed in time.

For the sake of unity of plot, too many complications should be avoided, unless the play is a comedy dependent for its fun upon complication. Too many complications may lead to a formula having more than three terms. This is fatal to the effect. Three terms are the full complement of any play; more than three indicate disjunction, that the author has, probably, enough material for two plays.

This does not, obviously, bar the under-plot or cross-plot. A photoplay may have an under-plot, as, for instance, in the dramatic synopsis,

the scheme of Max to get Maribelle alone, in his power; or, the plan of the booze-bandits in the comedy synopsis. But the cross-plot must be kept subordinate to the main plot and must contribute to it and converge with it, if unity of effect is to be had.

Under-plots and cross-plots are the material of situation comedy, where complications are piled on complications and the whole play nearly collapses from its own weight. The artificiality of effect gained by this means is very suitable for comedy; it is much less so for serious drama. Too often the melodramas of the screen derive their unreal and fantastic tone from the presence of complications which might have been omitted and still have left a play. For realism in effect the play should avoid undue complication.

Demonstration of the Methods Used in Plotting

After the foregoing analytical work, it would hardly do to close this chapter without illustrating to the beginner the process of thought used in building up a plot from an idea and formula. That such an illustration is of value to the author is undoubted, for it gives him the playwriting point of view and the workshop method.

The plot habit can be cultivated to a great degree; the process of thought involved can become natural to an author and be employed automatically. No doubt, the success of those who write numerous photoplays under pressure, is due to the habits which they have cultivated; they think in scenario terms or dramatically. Their ideas develop themselves and are ready

for synopsis or continuity on short notice. Only thus could any person write a photoplay a week and succeed with the quality of the product, not meaning to say that anyone DOES it.

We may begin with an idea — that of the financing of booze smugglers, or we may begin in the abstract with the idea of a man whose only daughter discovers that he is a bootlegger.

But, we ask ourselves, since the girl discovers the man's occupation, he cannot be an ordinary runner, as in that case she would not be likely to find it out unless he were arrested. It will not do, again, to have him a common peddler, as that is too low down the scale for our purpose. What shall he be? Well, why not try one of the men "higher up," a banker? That will do very well. But what kind of girl shall the daughter be? Evidently, she must be one of knowledge and intelligence. Why not a girl just out of college? That will fit in nicely.

Here we observe that the kind of people or characters we are to have in the plot is very important. Since their motives and actions shall govern the events to a great degree, their selection is important. At this stage also, we begin to perceive, perhaps dimly, that this idea promises comedy material or melodrama. We shall choose comedy or comedy-drama. There is nothing essentially tragic or serious about bootlegging from the DRAMATIC point of view, however disregardful of the laws it may be or however disreputable. We can extract comedy from our idea.

But, we ask ourselves, for a man higher up to become involved in the actual transactions of

bootleggers, he must be enmeshed by peculiar circumstances; for such a man would be cautious in the extreme and intelligent. But suppose we decide to have self-conceit one of his failings? That will get him into trouble if handled properly. How shall the girl discover him? The actual detail of this discovery can be left to the tactics of the idea; we are now concerned with the strategy or general plan. Let us suppose that she confronts him with her discovery, what shall he do? He is conceited; he will laugh it off. Why? Oh, because he feels safe. But how safe? That gives us pause. Why not have him in a position to "fix" the officers or officials? That is good, and that will lead to comedy and to action. We now have enough material for a formula.

Here is our formula:

A banker, whose only daughter is just home from college, is confronted with the fact that his daughter has discovered his operations in "fixing" matters for booze criminals. He laughs the matter off and boasts of his power; but his daughter resolves to bring the matter home to him by scaring him thoroughly. What shall be the result?

The critical conditions are plain; the excitant lies in her resolve to bring the danger home to her father; the results shall flow from this combination. It is evident that there is no moral problem or significance to this idea save the comedy significance of the banker being taught a lesson by his daughter. This is the problem which shall direct the plot events.

We now have our guide or control, our compass and barometer. About the next detail to be solved will be the method of the girl in bring-

ing a scare home to father. Shall she work alone? No, that would not do. That would make her efforts too artificial. If she seeks help, where shall she find it? It should be a man, someone who can act, can be relied on. He must be in her confidence and should have access to information about her dad. Who? Well, we might have a man in love with her. He might work in the bank of her father. Yes. But, if he is the girl's accepted lover, he may try to dissuade her from her plan. We can have him merely in love and hopeful. He must fear father too; that puts him in the right position for our purposes. But what incentive shall he have for his aid? Suppose that he loses his job? If the girl makes it plain that he shall be her accepted suitor, he will capitulate. That will do; she shall promise him herself. There we can squeeze in some comedy. We are after comedy.

But the banker will, of course, be cautious. How can the plotters discover anything definite on him if the police are unable to do it? The young man can keep his eyes and ears open at the bank; he has the "inside" there. Yes, he can notice that a certain customer of the bank draws many drafts on "cargoes" of hardware; that this customer spends lots of time locked in the private office with the banker. That is a starter. But how can any information be got? This requires thought. The information must be obtained quickly. It will not do to have the matter too complex, as it may increase the length of the story unduly. If the young man is suspicious, he will naturally listen. Let us place him alone to listen to conversation in the office.

He can hear just enough to give him ground for his plot. The customer will receive a cargo tomorrow; it will be run into a certain warehouse to be examined and paid for and then removed to his own cache. Dad will agree to finance the deal.

This is all well enough, but it will never do to stop here. Father must be brought into the matter directly, else he will not be frightened; there will be no cure. But how to get him into it directly? Many suggestions occur, but the one accepted has got to be simple and cannot call for any complications, as they would lengthen the story. The simplest seems to be a fake 'phone call, for he is used to being called about booze matters, let us say. That is settled.

But now that the plotters have definite information, what sort of plan shall they hatch? It must be susceptible of comedy; it must be reasonable. Silly ideas will not do. Why not have them impersonate prohibition officers and raid the scene? Good; but they must not be recognized by father. They shall be disguised, the girl dressed in male clothes. That will give the star a chance to look pretty dressed as a man. Now the matter is taking definite shape. But, if the plotters merely carry out and succeed with their plan, the plot will be tame. We must have some originality or novelty about it — some surprise or "punch." If the outcome can be seen ahead of time, the play will be weak. How are we to overcome this flaw? We might try complications. Comedy is the art of complication. Suppose we introduce some real prohibition officers into the plot. They can be watching this very warehouse. But that gets us

in hot water, for if they arrest our plotters as impersonators of federal officers it may be serious. We do not want any jail scenes. Suppose dad is arrested? That might cure him, but that will bring disgrace on him and his daughter. We want a cure without any of the "punishment." Suppose that the real officers raid the place without warrants? That will hardly do, as it is improbable, and, anyway, they would arrest our plotters for impersonation of federal agents. No, we must have them intercepted. How? Suppose we introduce two booze bandits and have them conceive the brilliant idea of robbing the officers of their warrants and then using these search warrants to "confiscate" the cargo in the name of the "law." That adds comedy and complication. Now, how shall it affect our plotters? Well, after the bandits get the warrants they will raid the warehouse to get the booze. Then our plotters can do their own "raiding." Good, we can have the plotters capture the bandits and the latter can "flash" their warrants and place the others under "arrest." That will phase our plotters and react on their plans. It gives a surprise slant to the events. But here father can "fix" the crooks, thus adding to the situation. For the outcome of this idea the student may refer to the second synopsis in this book.

Thus, it is easily seen that the process of thought by which an idea is given shape is the INVENTIVE process; that an idea grows by accretion or additions; that the first suggestions presented to the mind are not always the best. This suggests that the material should be wisely held in a temporary or fluid form until mature thought has

grappled with the possibilities and reviewed the opportunities for effective alterations. Revision is an indication of intelligence, not an admission of incompetence. The human being who never revises is he who never attempts to write anything higher than Dear Sir, Yours of the tenth at hand.

An author must THINK and invent, develop characters and connect incidents; his characters must give him the clue to his situations; out of his personages and situations he should wring the utmost of dramatic effect and originality. Only thought can solve such a problem; but this is not to say that all authors are equal as to inventive powers or perception of the original and striking. The events should not be too complicated, nor the motives of the characters too obscure or involved.

A process of thought analogous to the foregoing is required in the writing of every dramatic story, whether in the synoptical or scenario form. Analysis comes first; practice makes skilful.

Analytical and Creative Exercises

1. Reduce to cause and effect the plot of "Moths and Candles."

2. Reduce to cause and effect and then to statements of crisis the plot of any photoplay on the screen.

3. Can you reduce Poe's "Gold-bug" to a chain of cause and effect controlled by a formula of three terms?

4. Take the plot of "Eugenie Grandet" and explain the creative process of thought which led to the choice of characters and events.

5. Separate the plot events of Balzac's "Wild Ass' Skin" from all minor detail and episodes.

6. Is plot a synopsis or story? Why not?

7. Write a plot to demonstrate any formula you choose and direct it by a moral problem of your choice. Reduce to cause and effect.

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER VI

STRATEGY AND TACTICS; PLOT AND DETAILS

Thus far, study of the technique of photoplay writing has shown demonstrably that plot

(a) Is made up of the dominant causes and effects

(b) Is controlled by the formula and its delimitations

(c) Is influenced and directed by the moral problem.

There is, however, in every photoplay a large amount of material, i. e., incidents, facts, details, which cannot be classified as a direct contribution to the plot causes and effects. Moreover, the plot, which, by its chain of events, demonstrates the formula and outlines the play, is itself developed and rounded out by numerous smaller incidents and details. Every photoplay, whether written as a synopsis or continuity, is, therefore, made up of much material besides the plot. Reference to the photoplays in Chapters 23 and 24 will render this DUAL character of the material manifest to the student. It becomes pertinent at this point of the study to examine these minor details which carry out or round off a plot.

The relative importance of plot to these minor

details is that of **STRATEGY** to **TACTICS.*** A plot is the strategy of a play, the larger plan which covers the entire campaign, the major details. The smaller details by which the strategy is executed or accomplished are the tactics. Therefore, any complete play of the screen contains both strategy and tactics, each of which is important in its place and is a complement of the other. Comparison might be made to the mechanism of an automobile, in which the major features of power-plant and chassis resemble plot, while the smaller parts and details which carry out the larger ones, refining the whole and making a smooth-running machine, are the tactics. Neither division could exist independently of the other. A plot by itself does not make a photoplay.

Stage dramatists have long referred to the combination of strategy and tactics as the **ACTION** of a play. Action in this sense, when applied to the photoplay, includes the entire material, every event, motive, change of relations, detail, movement of the characters, bit of pantomime or business, leader or dialogue insert. Analysis of the continuity in Chapter 23 will illustrate a dramatic action made up of strategy and tactics.

The action embraces all the scenes of whatever kind or purpose, as has been hinted. The opening scene is episodic and belongs entirely to tactics; it sets the atmosphere of war days. Scene 3 begins the critical conditions and is a plot scene; but only the disgust of Helen is a plot **DETAIL**, the other details are tactical, such as her mother's apology to the guests in scene 5.

*I believe Sir Arthur Pinero first used these terms in this connection; and Mr. Clayton Hamilton borrowed them for one of his essays.

Scene 8 introduces Duane, but only Helen's boredom is of the plot, the details are tactics. Running on to scene 12, Mrs. Cabot's decision is of the plot. In scene 14 we are introduced to the doctor's office; we are still in the critical conditions of the play. The details of this scene belong to tactics. Scene 15 is a "continuity shot," and belongs to the tactics. The insert in scene 16 is tactics and prepares for the excitant which is to come. We may pass on through a few incidents of plot and many details of tactics to scene 26. At this point the excitant is begun, but many details shall be necessary to complete it. The excitant is of the plot. The tactics now develop the course of Duane's jealousy, establishing Mrs. Cabot's fondness for Duane (plot detail). Scene 39 is a plot scene developed by tactics which point the way toward Duane's intrigue. Scene 41 further defines this plot event by the forged note (tactics). Scene 45 is of the plot. Scene 48 is episodic and again strikes the war note. Duane's dislike for the sight of soldiers and Mrs. Cabot's approval are of the plot. All of these scenes, however, contain much tactical detail. Scene 55 is plot, but the tactics control its form. Scene 57 concludes the excitant and is a plot scene. The news item (tactics) shows that the intrigue has succeeded. From this point on the student easily may separate strategy from tactics, according to the foregoing method.

In the synopsis, a similar process may be followed. For example, Anne's choice between love and ambition is of the plot, the excitant; but George's arrival and interruption are tactics which forced her decision and the issues that follow.

Similarly, the departure for New York is of the plot; the railway station episodes are tactics. The student should separate the remainder of the synopsis in the same manner. Tactics may not be so fully described and elaborated in a synopsis as in a scenario, but the dual division of the material is just as evident in the one as in the other.

Having now made the distinction, i. e.,

(a) That strategy is the major plan or the plot effects

(b) That tactics are the details which execute the strategical plan or carry out the plot effects; we are prepared to take up a few important principles employed in the choice and management of tactical details and incidents. Principles such as these are modified largely by individual taste and originality; and they should not be taken as hard and fast rules, inelastic and mechanical, by the beginner. The student's own observation should confirm and support these principles.

The care and taste exhibited in the selection of tactical details largely solve the artistic problem of any photoplay. In "Lavender and Old Lace" this problem was largely tactical, for the strategy was simple, the atmosphere important, the scenes predominantly tactical. Tactics can do much to minimize the repulsiveness of acts of violence, crime, or moral obliquity. Refer to the latter events of the detailed synopsis. In the continuity, the doctor's issuance of a "dope" prescription is shorn of a great part of its distastefulness, when we reflect that he has been tricked

by the forged note. The note is good tactics for this reason, and for the further fact that his prescription precludes a suit against the newspaper and thus, perhaps, discovery of the culprit. The object of the play is not the punishment of Duane for his duplicity, but the contrast in honor between the two men. Duane's eventual discomfiture is assured. In scene 119, when the doctor's sudden suspicion is aroused by the announcement of Helen's engagement to Duane, we may say that it comes from recollection of the note; but the note need not be shown, for the important point is the clearing up of the doctor's painful doubt over the announcement. In "Loves of Anatol," the story was episodic and, hence, mainly tactical; but each episode had its own strategy and tactics, though taken all together they were predominatingly tactical with relation to the plot.

Tactics may be dramatic or undramatic. This shall be made clearer in another chapter. For the present, it will suffice to say that the choice of other and different tactical details in the continuity would have produced a different effect on the spectator, perhaps undesirable. In other words, the dramatic effect of the tactics must harmonize with the dramatic plan or plot of the story.

Tactics largely govern the tone of novelty or originality in a photoplay.* Ordinary events brought about by novel means are frequently more interesting than original events developed by stereotyped tactics. Tactics may even take

*Refer to the farce or situation comedies of the screen.

a weak or undramatic plot and make it resemble a drama, although the resemblance is superficial and is easily penetrated by the trained mind. Numerous screen plays of the earlier periods fell into this class. Even now such releases appear at intervals. In truth, many staff scenarists are merely TACTICIANS; their STRATEGY is subordinate and inferior to tactics.

Tactics should not add unduly to the complications of a story, else the length may be too great. This is a matter of unity, of keeping all the parts in their proper proportions.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that strategy is a problem of WHAT to do; tactics of HOW to do it. The necessity of tactical skill to the strategist cannot be minimized. The synoptist must employ tactics in his synopses. If continuity, for any reason, becomes necessary, a good tactician readily turns his strategy into the scenario form. The more effective the tactics the better the play. Success as a photoplaywright cannot be attained solely by a plot; the minor details require attention. No better advice can be given the beginner than the admonition to cultivate tactical and strategical skill together. Neither can take the place of the other.

TEST EXERCISES

1. Show how the plot cause and effect of any photoplay selected from current releases is carried out by the tactics.
2. Separate strategy (plot) from tactics in the synopsis, "Moths and Candles."

3. Can you improve on the tactics of the continuity in Chapter 23 without increasing the length of the story materially?

4. Supply dramatic and original tactics for any stereotyped photoplay of your choice.

5. Would you consider it good advice to practice plotting entirely to the exclusion of tactical exercises?

6. Point out which of the following scenes of the continuity belong essentially to strategy and which to tactics: Nos. 60, 61, 67, 71, 72, 78, 85, 88, 89, 101 and 107.

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER VII

EXTERNALIZING THE PLAY

The teaching of creative arts is a subject shrouded in misconception and confused by fallacious reasoning. Those there are who declare that photoplay writing, for instance, cannot be taught. Others there are who as forcefully assert the reverse, i. e., that anyone may be taught to write photoplays. Obviously, neither extreme stands upon solid ground; for the only part of any creative art which can be taught is the structure and technique — the craftsmanship of the art. Even men of genius employ craftsmanship; but no amount of study of technique will substitute for the want of genius itself. A dullard cannot be trained to mental superiority, although he may become a useful citizen and possess numerous other merits. Ability can be trained but it cannot be inculcated.

The principal error, attributable to this confusion over the teaching of photoplay writing, seems to lie in the fallacious assumption that, to teach playwriting successfully, the teacher must himself be a commercially recognized exponent of the art. While it is desirable that this condition be fulfilled, it is not essential. For, if the assumption were true, and, obviously, it is not, the literary and dramatic departments of our great universities would have to close for lack of

capable instructors. It was this amusing paralogism under which many of the earlier writers on photoplay technique labored.* Several were inferior playwrights, and, according to their own reasoning, should have taught their disciples to write inferior plays. And yet there is no case recorded where the mere observance of their teachings — and theirs alone — produced a single successful photodramatist. From this it would appear that teaching is a profession distinct from others, requiring ability often not developed in the author. Also, it indicates that the success of the teacher (often momentary) is no guarantee to the neophyte, and that no one textbook can be called the apotheosis of education in any art.

The foregoing paragraphs seem pertinent to introduce the subject of this chapter; for the entire aim of technique in photoplay writing, as in other creative arts, is to enable the mind moved by dramatic inspiration to externalize its images and conceptions effectively, to reduce them to the organic form of the photodrama, that they may be acted before a camera and thrown upon a screen. Externalization is the only part of an art which can be imparted to the student. But there are no well-defined, no well-established RULES of externalization; principles must yield to individual originality and taste. Principles are, however, very helpful; and it shall be the purpose of this chapter to offer the fundamental principles of pictorial drama as EXTERNALIZED, for the beginner's aid.

All persons know that, while perusing an

*A number of the earlier writers are listed among the works of the bibliography (Appendix).

interesting story, pictures form in the mind to represent and keep pace with the events. It should be equally evident that, in writing a story, similar pictures are formed in the creative mind, representing the events as the author sees them inwardly. The problem of craftsmanship is the transference of these mental pictures into written pictures which may be, further, transmuted to film pictures. In this process, the synopsis or scenario is the medium of externalization which stands between the author's mental images and the shadowy reproductions of the screen. We may disregard the alterations of the script made in production and look only at the drama as it comes from the mind of the creator.

Some persons have the faculty to externalize their conceptions into a medium such as the scenario much more readily than others. Some find the limitations of pictorial drama easy to circumvent; others need long practice to develop the nearly extinct "bump" of externalization or pictorialization. The writing of a synopsis is not the same externalizing process as the writing of a mere story, as many must learn; for the synoptist must so develop his material that it adapts itself easily to continuity or dramatic arrangement and effect.

The entire photoplay, from title to final fade, is external; but certain details exhibit the peculiar pictorial process more emphatically than others, and it is with these peculiar and marked effects that we shall mainly deal in this chapter. We may now begin the principles of externalization by saying that strategy, as we saw it in the preceding chapter, is the dramatic EFFECT of a pictorial

drama, while tactics, on the other hand, are the methods used to pictorialize the strategy. All this is much the same as to say that the strategy conforms to the author's mental images, while tactics involve the choice of means to externalize these images dramatically and understandably.

Let us examine two terms, objectivity and symbolism, which are to be used with reference to externalization of a photoplay.

OBJECTIVITY may be defined, in photoplay writing, as the use of OBJECTS or things to convey certain facts or ideas essential to the action of a photodrama, these objects being such as are intrinsically pictorial and preferable to explanation by textual means, such as inserts, subtitles, and other external artifices not truly pictorial in the dramatic sense. Thus, the employment of such objects as a photograph, a ring, a flag, a weapon, or other things that carry ideas to the spectators, may be called objectivity.

SYMBOLISM may be defined as representing one thing by another. In photoplay writing, a symbol is a suggestive object. Thus, a baby's shoe stands for love and motherhood; it is objective, but, even more, it is symbolic. Thus, symbolism may be called suggestive objectivity.

Both of these externalizing methods are PICTORIAL; they are a part of the dramatic tactics. The objects that may be employed are limitless and controlled only by the material of a particular play. Familiar ones are books, jewels, articles of clothing, toys, weapons, documents, and many others. The characters, atmosphere and events of the play suggest the objects to be selected; but the author's inventiveness and originality

largely govern the choice. The more symbolic the objects the better. In "Lavender and Old Lace," the faded bridal dress, tenderly preserved, is symbolic objectivity; in "A Romance of the Redwoods," an old doll plays an important part and is rendered symbolic by the action. There are many other tactical objects which externalize ideas and emotions and create an effect. Any photoplay will furnish examples of some kind.

There are, in addition to pictorial objects, certain objective forms of communication used to convey exact information or explanations to the onlookers. Such devices of externalization as a newspaper item, a letter, a page of a document, or numerous other means of information, are called "inserts." They are essential when ideas which cannot be carried by pantomime or pictorial objects must be conveyed to the spectators. Another and more conventional "insert" is the leader or subtitle, or the cut-in leader which represents the speech of a character at some critical moment. The student may refer to the continuity in Chapter 23 for examples of this kind of externalization. Some photoplays require a great deal more of this sort of objectivity than do others. Leaders are, however, not truly objective, but are more in the nature of conventions.

Textual artifices are employed where purely objective means would not convey an idea clearly. Confusion must be avoided in the important points of a story; and only exact information will do when the issues threaten to become obscure or confused. Text is not so desirable as objects, and far inferior to symbolic objects. The ideal photoplay is one in which the story unfolds

itself from title to end by pantomime and objectivity alone; but in actual practice this ideal can seldom be approximated, and a compromise must be struck with the material of the play. If the play is to be self-explanatory, all its parts must be understandable. Observation will show that only very simple and stereotyped stories, a rehash of the old, time-worn motives and incidents, are self-explanatory without the aid of subtitles or cut-ins. Since originality is now the demand of the producers, spurred on by a weary public, we need not look for a purely pictorial photodrama.

All of which is much the same as saying that the photodramatist is limited to a medium which lends itself most readily to physical, concrete, tangible action; that exhibits its individuality as an art by the pictorialization of its material; that calls for its most effective expression by objectivity. Ideas which are not clearly expressed in pictures are peculiarly difficult to render dramatic on the screen. Mere inserts or leaders explaining certain points are not at all times helpful, for often they rob the action of its suspense and interest by anticipating some idea that should have been disclosed pictorially. Abstruse mental conflicts, struggles of the soul, abstract emotions, all these are intangible and hostile to the pictorial medium.

It should not be inferred from the foregoing that all mental or emotional conflict is barred from the screen. In "The Whispering Chorus," when the starving criminal, who is fishing for his food, feels the tug on his line and pulls up from the lake a corpse, his varying emotions and mental states are clearly revealed by the acting alone.

But it should be noted that the pantomime is effective only in relation to the OBJECT on the line — the corpse. We already know certain facts about this criminal, and his "catch" becomes dramatic objectively. The mental conflict which expresses itself abstractly, which is unrelated to objects or things, is that which is impossible to the photoplay medium. Select, for example, such stories as Ibsen's, "Rosmersholm" or his "Wild Duck." They are the reverse of pictorial material, and, although dramatic in dialogue, yet they could not be translated into screen drama without many changes of their material and the consequent loss of much of their significance and effect. The aspiring scenarist may be sure that, if at any time, his own material grows unusually balky and refuses to be externalized pictorially, it is due to want of the tangible elements and objective connections needed in the photoplay.

For workshop examples of externalization in the detailed synopsis, observe how objectivity is employed to convey certain ideas at certain moments. As an instance, Arthur, whose car has broken down near George's country home, meets George, and in the conversation of old acquaintances, may be inferred to learn that George is not married. He hears a car drive away in the night. When he finds Anne's pin, he recollects the suspicious circumstances and suspects an assignation. Practically the whole situation is clear because of this pin, needing no text or dialogue. The pin is symbolic in that it stands for Anne. Again, in the same synopsis, Jack's play is objective; Max's jewelry is symbolic, as it stands for viceful luxury; the ring which

Anne scornfully returns to George is a symbol, an emblem of choice; all these things aid in carrying ideas to the spectators and can be used in the continuity to be made from the synopsis.

As a further example of objective externalization in a synopsis, let us suppose that one character must demand of another, an officer, at some critical moment of the action, his right to make an arrest. Without objective devices, the idea cannot be definitely conveyed unless by a dialogue cut-in; for the demand might be about anything or nothing. But presume that we have already seen the warrant sworn out for the arrest. If the officer is questioned, he merely produces his warrant; that settles all questions and silences all opposition. Refer to "Father's Final 'Fix'" for an example along this line.

In synopsis writing, as we may infer from these examples, an eye should be kept open to opportunities for objective tactics. These are always helpful in the continuity; and their presence in the synopsis indicates the author's recognition of the dramatic methods necessary in photoplay writing and his familiarity with the problems to be solved. This in itself is a kind of recommendation of his work. Of course, objectivity should not be carried to an extreme, and the characters need not be continually juggling objects of some kind; but the objective method is the true method in photoplay writing, as opposed to the narrative methods of the short-story or the novel.

In the continuity, there are a number of externalizing devices employed. The newspaper in scene 1, and the headlines which follow, offer an example. Another one is the news item of

scene 16 (insert), or still another is Mrs. Cabot's card. It introduces her to the doctor in a natural manner. The thermometer is objective and presents a chance for effective "business" or pantomime in scene 19. All the dialogue or cut-in leaders are secondary objectivity or conventions; for certain facts must be explained clearly, if the story is to be effective. Leaders make for clarity, but they may detract from the suspense and surprise of the play. The student may find other examples, such as the note or the prescription.

In "The Loves of Anatol," the various symbolic and objective contrivances were numerous. Jewelry, empty jewel cases, a roll of money, all these were employed. They saved much explanation and were effective pictorially.

In "Forever," on the other hand, we have an undramatic story, frail of plot, stereotyped. The hero and heroine were lovers in childhood and were separated. Later by a miraculous coincidence they are reunited, but are again separated when the hero is imprisoned. While a prisoner, his sweetheart is burned to death in an orphanage. In his struggles to escape his jailers and go to her rescue, he dies of heart failure. Here, indeed, is a story that can be pictorialized almost in its entirety, needing few if any leaders or inserts; but it is undramatic and undesirable in its hackneyed simplicity. Good photography cannot bolster up this grade of material.

A final suggestion to the beginner is not superfluous. If he finds that his material unreels itself into a complete series of pictures with no need for explanations or inserts, he may justly be

suspicious of its originality and dramatic force. In truth, he may gauge his material at the one extreme as too abstract, if he finds it balky and hard to externalize, and, at the other, as too stereotyped, if it externalizes with wonderful facility. Between these two undesirable poles lie the really dramatic and significant productions of the screen.

Test Exercises

1. Select any photoplay release and write out every objective and symbolic device used in it. Explain the functions of the various devices.
2. Take one of your own plots and externalize it into a synopsis which shall employ objectivity wherever needful to carry the ideas.
3. From Balzac's "Wild Ass' Skin" develop means of pictorializing the mental agony of the skin's owner as it shrinks.
4. What sort of photoplays pictorialize most easily? With most difficulty?

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER VIII

EVENTS, INCIDENTS AND THEIR CAUSAL CONNECTION

The noticeable artificiality of many photoplays has led to innumerable strictures upon the "movie" art, not solely from the professional critics, as might be anticipated, but as well from the more intelligent sub-stratum of moving picture audiences. For no observant or thoughtful person can have failed to notice the bizarre or even grotesque effects produced by many glaring examples of the screen melodrama. Impossible, albeit thrilling, concatenations of events, with situations brought about by miraculous chances; trains of sensational episodes strung together by the slightest thread of cause; these have been and, to an extent, still are a part of the photoplay releases. The true craftsman cannot fail to be interested in knowing, least of all fail to be concerned in avoiding, the underlying concomitants of such artificiality; for, given the reasons of such effects, he is enabled to control their frequency and extent in his own dramatic compositions.

As a generality, we may begin by saying that plausibility and verisimilitude are largely absent from plays which appeal alone to sensation, dis-

regarding intelligence. But that, of course, merely brings up the question of plausibility. For the present, it may be stated that the onlooker's acceptance of a play, the effect of plausibility, is due in the main to events which are connected by cause and effect. The less apparent are the causes of any happening, the greater the loss of plausibility; and this is true despite life's paradox, i. e., that many of life's leading events are accidental or coincidental and not sharply marked off by cause and effect. On the other hand, we see that chance and coincidence underlie the artificiality of a play. This is explained if we recall that a play is a dramatic product based on a plan or organism, while life is formless, having no plan that we can decipher, no boundaries save birth and death. Failure to bring the events of a play within the lines of its structure, its organism, by causal connections, is responsible for the artificiality of effect referred to.

Important Definitions*

Several definitions of importance to the craftsman are now essential, as follows:

An event in a play is anything which happens or comes to pass, as distinguished from things which exist or have already eventuated. All the occurrences of a photoplay may be called events. They are held together by a causal relationship or sequence of cause and effect.

An incident is anything which occurs as part of an action or in connection with an event; it is a subordinate event. This implies that minor happenings are incidents, but, for all practical

*Consult any standard dictionary.

purposes, the terms, incident and event, may be used interchangeably or synonymously.

An accident, from the dramatic point of view, is an event occurring with CAUSELESS unexpectedness—an event without an immediate, apparent or assignable cause. In other words, it is something apart from and outside of the chain of cause and effect — a mere CHANCE. It has the effect of singleness or detachment.

Coincidence is that which coincides or comes together in events, but without pre-arranged or assignable cause; this implies an accident or chance on at least one side of the coincidence. The coincidence is, however, not single or detached in its effect; it brings together a multiplication of chances or accidents.

ACCIDENTS AND COINCIDENTS

Perhaps an example will clarify the distinction between accident and coincidence.

If, in a melodrama, the villain is run over by an automobile or spilled from an airplane, the event is an accident. Its cause cannot be foreseen nor clearly explained afterwards in relation to the other events of the play. Why was the man run over; why not die a natural death in bed? The singleness of effect results from our recognition that the event stands alone — a mere chance. But suppose that he is run over on the very day when he was to foreclose the mortgage on the old homestead. Here, indeed, we have an accident; but there is no longer any detachment of effect, for the events have come together in time — the accident has taken place on the very day of the foreclosure. This is a coincidence.

Again, take "The Whispering Chorus." We have a starving malefactor fishing in a lake for the food he needs. His line catches in something; he pulls it in to shore and finds a corpse. Thus far, it is an accident; his line has merely chanced to catch in the body. There is no cause for it, as he might have fished elsewhere or his line might have caught in some other object. But when the body is drawn to shore it is seen to resemble the fisherman; the criminal can even change clothes with the corpse and transfer his identity to the dead man! It has to be acknowledged that the importance of the resemblance overtops the accidental discovery. There is no longer a single chance; two chances have come together and we recognize a coincidence. No more definite cause can be cited for the resemblance than for the discovery; the body might have resembled anyone or none. By the COINCIDENTS the effect is enlarged and enhanced.

When we come to ask ourselves the extent to which this coincidence is plausible, we perceive a very important element of plausibility, namely, tactics. The coincidence in itself is patently improbable; yet the manner in which the body is found is plausible because it might easily occur in life. Many fishermen have drawn in strange "catches." Why not here? Obviously, the tactics are plausible and go far to remove the fictitiousness of the accident. Of the coincidence, however, not so much can be asserted. The resemblance cannot be glossed over by tactics and the unreality obtrudes itself. The artificiality is evident. Occurring as it does early in the play, as one of the earlier conditions, it loses

much of its oddity in the naturalness or verisimilitude of the succeeding events. Only this advantage of position, this priority of occurrence, can render acceptable such bald chance. The later in the action a coincidence is introduced, the more artificial its effect.

Part Played by Coincidence

Accident and coincidence play an important role in photodrama, as they do in literature or in life itself. Perhaps the photographic medium presents them more abruptly than does the dialogue drama or, to take another example, the novel. Or it may be that the broad range of photoplay action, its wide scope as to locations and settings, the camera's ability to encompass the four corners of the earth, make coincidence essential to draw together by some means quicker than cause and effect the persons and events of a photoplay. Certain it is that, if every coming together of these in the photoplay were acceptable only through a close-knit strategy, the evening's entertainment would run hours beyond the fatigue limit of the spectators.

For these reasons it may be that many photoplays predicate the action upon some outstanding coincidence, depending upon the general cause and effect and the use of lifelike tactics to veneer the crudities of strategy and deceive the attention of the spectators. Be this as it may, the whole point hinges on what an audience will or will not accept. The skilful author can induce acceptance of material which would surely fail from the hands of the bungler.

For example, "The Prince and the Pauper,"

which some years ago was adapted to the screen, is founded on the striking resemblance of a London pauper to the Prince of Wales. Natural tactics bring them together and, once we have accepted the conditions, the author leads us on into a sequence of occurrences which is logical enough from the viewpoint of his premises.

Again, "The Wild Ass' Skin," which several years ago appeared upon the screen in an abominable version called, "The Magic Skin," stipulates that we accept the bargain made with the Devil before we can take an interest in the succeeding events. Here no coincidence predicates the action, but plausibility is dependent upon acceptance of the basic conditions. This acceptance was easier to gain in the literary than in the photodramatic medium, since thephotoplay employed "trick photography" to introduce Satan to his victim.

If there is any one salient reason why the normal onlooker accepts coincidences in the photodrama, it is, perhaps, contained in the skill applied by the author to maneuvering the events and details of the story. As was hinted, the position occupied by a coincidence is of importance to its effect; for, if too late in the action, there is no opportunity to render it innocuous by the realism of succeeding occurrences. And too much stress cannot, therefore, be laid on the naturalness of tactical details. Naturalness is due to the similarity of the details to those of life, or life-likeness of minor incidents. Conventionality need not be mistaken for lifelikeness. In the use of a fishing line to bring the body to the surface of the lake, there is a causal relation or connection, natural

and acceptable. Here the tactics have a kind of pseudo cause and effect — a basic relation with life. On the other hand, the glass of poisoned wine, which the villain of a melodrama drinks by error, is CONVENTIONAL enough but not life-like or natural. It savors of the clap-trap of the dime-novel. We may, indeed, pass it over for the moment, but afterthought is sure to assign it to the limbo of unreality.

WORKSHOP ILLUSTRATIONS

In the detailed synopsis, we may study several coincidences. We observe that the story is not based on a coincidence; only the action employs chance and, even then, but one major chance. The timely arrival of George Sylvester, who influences Anne's decision, is a minor coincidence; for Anne was already inclined toward her ambition. The ascertainment of Jack that Max has carried Maribell to the actor's rooms is not purely chance, for Jack has gone to Max's office to leave a play to be read. Jack's meeting with Anne as she emerges from the restaurant is coincidental; but as anyone is liable to meet anyone on the streets of a city, it is not offensively artificial. Arthur's breakdown near the country home of George is a coincidence, but is somewhat prepared by Anne's glimpse of Arthur in a crowd, for we know that he is now in New York. A breakdown is not improbable, even with the modern automobile, and might be called natural tactics. This drawing of Arthur together with Anne and George is the one major coincidence of the story.

The reader may wonder why the coincidence could not have been avoided by having Arthur

merely follow Anne and George; but when earlier in the story Arthur left Anne, he thought George her favored suitor, and, as he does not know her whereabouts since their parting, the coincidence appears to be the quickest way to effect this meeting. It may be inferred that Anne uses a stage name and is not, therefore, known to the world by her own. Clearly, this coincidence was necessary to obviate a long, detailed series of incidents essential to accomplish the same thing by cause and effect.

In the continuity, Helen's meeting with the doctor at the hospital is chance, but the tactics are natural; for almost all the doctors of a city practice in its hospitals and sanitoria, and nurses are likely to meet any of them. That the doctor happens to be chosen as a draft board physician is not unnatural, when we reflect that the war made no nice distinctions where men were chosen for service. Besides, a mere newspaper story not followed by prosecution, would have no standing. This is the major coincidence of the scenario, but the tactics are natural in that one doctor might as likely be appointed as another. The later events have time to remove the fictitious effect of the incident. If all the persons and incidents had to be drawn together by pure cause and effect, the play would be too long, too tiresome.

How to Use Coincidence

Are there, then, any principles by which the use of coincidence in photoplay craftsmanship may be guided? There are a few which might be suggested by common sense. We have already seen the importance of position and of tactics in

general; let us now consider a few additional facts.

Major coincidence, it is clear, should not be employed except where demanded by economy of material. It should occupy an advantageous position and be covered by adroit tactics. As a rule, there should not be more than ONE major coincidence to a play; for the more numerously they occur, the more palpably artificial is the action. As many as three principal coincidences will make a very improbable melodrama. Of course, the comedy, especially the low-grade comedy, need be guided by no such rule; but all comedy-drama should conform to a standard of probability. The scenarist may refer to the comedy synopsis for an example of coherent and acceptable comedy. The screen furnishes numerous examples of the lemon-pie type of comedy.

Minor coincidences should not dominate any serious photoplay, though in comedies the tactics may be more artificial than in the play intended to have significance. The more the minor coincidences, as a rule, the cruder the tactics of the story. There should not, we may safely say, be more than THREE minor coincidences in any photoplay of serious appeal. The beginner will, perhaps, find that he has less temptation toward minor coincidence than toward major. He may find it easier to choose natural tactics than to invent faultless strategy.

As to tactics, the choice of lifelike details can do much to make a story plausible. The most convincing scenarists are often the expert tacticians; and good strategy can be nullified by awkward or far-fetched details. The screen will offer the beginner any number of examples of

what to avoid and what to select, if he will but analyze them carefully and pigeon-hole them in memory.

The ideal of the true craftsman is pure cause and effect; but in playwriting, as in life, we shall have to make a compromise now and then, since the camera may dictate a change of material, or the sacrifice of one principle in order to carry out another. The solution of such a problem offers much room for individual originality and dramatic perception. Creative ability is not hampered by principles nor deadened by analysis of the structure of a photoplay; it is, in truth, directed by principles and heightened by the knowledge that comes from careful analysis.

Analytical Exercises

The student should point out all the major and minor coincidences in the following story taken from a photoplay called, "Hail the Woman."

Oliver Beresford, a religious bigot, rules his household with an iron will. His son, David, his wife, and his daughter, Judith, bow to his wish. David is chosen by his father to do foreign mission work; Judith is set aside to be the wife of a farmer. The son, David, has secretly married the daughter of the village mendicant and piece-worker. Nan's (the girl) marriage is a sworn secret, and when her father discovers it and that she is to have a child, he wrings a confession from her as to the identity of her lover, but she does not tell that she has MARRIED David. Thinking her disgraced, Beresford pays the mendicant to take her away from the village. David remains

silent as to his paternity. Judith becomes friendly with a stranger from the city who is spending the summer near the village. One evening she is seen by her affianced husband to leave the cottage of this man and is accused of unbecoming conduct, though her visit was innocent. Wild with hurt pride, she goes to New York, where she secures a position and prospers. There she becomes interested in settlement work and falls in love with Dick Stuart, whose mother does much good among the poor. Judith chances to meet Nan, who tells her, while dying, the true story of the marriage to David and gives the little David into her care. The father has, meanwhile, entered the ministry, and now comes to New York with Beresford to attend a church convention, at which he is honored with an important post. He and Beresford meet Mrs. Stuart who happens to attend the convention, and she invites them to her home. There they meet Judith, who is introduced as Dick's fiancee; but Beresford denounces her and derides her story of Nan's marriage to David. Judith tells Dick she shall clear her name and return to him. She goes back to the village with the child. True to form, Beresford orders her off his premises, but her mother revolts and demands justice for all. They go to the church where David is to preach his farewell sermon, and there the child wanders up the aisle and tugs at his coat. David recognizes his son and, lifting him up, confesses his paternity to the congregation and resigns his post. Judith returns to Dick and Beresford sees his bigotry laid low.

1. Select the coincidences from a photoplay seen at the theatre and try to substitute cause and effect. Does this lengthen the story?

2. Reduce one of your own plots to cause and effect and identify all coincidences or accidents.

3. Choose several examples of famous plays or stories founded on coincidence and explain your reasons for accepting them as plausible.

4. How many major coincidences can a photoplay have and still be probable? Cite an example to prove the number chosen by you.

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER IX

THE DRAMATIC AND UNDRAMATIC

There is, possibly, no word in the general language more overworked than the word "dramatic," and certainly there is, in the terminology of stage or screen, no word more misunderstood. Commonly, any sensational incident or episode of life, any anomalous tangle of human relations, is said to be "dramatic." On the other hand, there is a tendency among many writers of the theatrical world and of filmdom to endue the term with a sort of cabalistic meaning, which is resorted to whenever the lexicon fails to supply a more appropriate adjective. It seems hardly necessary to point out that what is DRAMATIC is so by virtue of some distinguishing attributes of form or essence which alone merit the description, and which are immediately recognizable as dramatic when the approved criteria are applied.

Just what the criteria are, or how applied, is a matter of some debate, which we may hope to clarify in this chapter. It may be helpful, therefore, to consider several of the longer-lived attempts to define the dramatic.

Ferdinand Brunetiere, the critic, regarded the specifically dramatic as a conflict or struggle of man with his environment, or of man's will with

natural forces opposing it. This idea of conflict or struggle is one of the hardiest dogmas of drama, well entrenched as an axiom of playwriting.

Freytag, whose principles of dramatic technique are justly celebrated, could not divest his theories of drama of the distorting bias of "poesy." His is, perhaps, the best general example of classical dogmatism.

Some lesser writers, whose definitions are noted here only because they indicate how superficial may be the analysis of the trade-paper reviewer, have spoken of the dramatic, especially the photodramatic, as contrast. Contrast is, no doubt, strikingly brought out upon the screen; but contrast is as much a part of spoken drama, or of fiction, as it is of the film play.

In recent years, William Archer has almost bodily thrown overboard the doctrines of earlier writers and has attempted a newer formulation of the dramatic in terms of crisis. Says he,* "A play is a more or less rapidly-developing crisis in destiny or circumstances, and a dramatic scene (as contrasted with one which is undramatic) is a crisis within a crisis, clearly furthering the ultimate event." As to the accuracy of this view when applied to dramatic FORM there can be no doubt; and we shall look into it more closely in later paragraphs.

Since the photoplay is generally conceded to be a dramatic art, it is, therefore, distinguished or demarked by the essential characteristics of other forms of drama; and we shall consider the various definitions of the dramatic as they are applicable, or inapplicable, to the screen-drama.

*Play Making, 1912.

Be it said that the conflict, for example, is not confined to dramatic material; it is found in all branches of fiction, as it is in life. Of itself it is obviously not dramatic; for only certain kinds of struggles, only conflicts waged under certain circumstances are, or can be, suitable material for plays. On the screen, mere conflicts of will against environment, or against other wills, largely lack effectiveness because of their abstract or vague character, shut off as they are from representative pictorial externalization. The photoplay is better adapted to those conflicts which are dominantly physical or objective; delicate shades of meaning, lofty moral abstractions, these cannot be filmed. There are, besides, photodramas in which conflict plays but a small part, a minor role, such as "Lavender and Old Lace." That such may not be truly dramatic is scarcely ascribable to the slight or moral nature of the conflict. Clearly, then, while conflict may be dramatic, its presence does not necessarily create drama.

As for contrast, it may be dismissed with the statement that life is little else; but life is not, therefore, drama.

With the Archer formula of the dramatic no fault can be found; since crisis is a part of drama, and since it describes dramatic form with noticeable accuracy. Crisis, however, does not comprise the essence of dramatic material, for it exists in fiction equally as often as in the photoplay. In this respect it is no more satisfactory as a definition than is conflict. While drama is crisis, crisis is not necessarily drama; the dramatic form, on the other hand, is crucial of import, as we have seen under the subject of plot. The

dramatic form implies crisis; but the crises of life are often incapable of being given the dramatic form.

It has to be admitted, in the face of these objections, that there is no pronounced line of demarcation between the dramatic and the undramatic, except in so far as **FORM** is concerned. Moreover, there is no sharp differentiation in the dramatic essence of material intended for photoplay production, or short-story material, or the material of the novel. These overlap. Even the dramatic form is not dramatic because of any one factor or element or attribute, but because of a combination of these.

It would be absurd, obviously, to seek for a few features by which an absolute delimitation of the dramatic might be made, either in form or essence. If, indeed, such a discrepancy is not found in life — and it is not — why should we seek it in the material of a play? We may conclude, therefore, that the criteria of the dramatic must be applied as a body; that no single criterion will do, either for the essence of dramatic material or for the form of the drama.

Reaction as a Touchstone

It is by no means true, however, that there is no specifically dramatic element in life's material, which, when heightened and quickened by dramatic treatment and presented in the form of drama, responds with those peculiarly penetrating effects which we instinctively recognize as dramatic. In fact, I hold those events to be dramatic which, when accentuated by dramatic form, show the **REACTION** upon a character in the play

of something which he has himself set in motion, or caused to be set in motion.* This reaction, which affects the character who has set some certain circumstances in motion, may assume any one or combination of three general divisions or types, namely:

(a) The reaction is physical in its results
(b) The reaction is mental or moral in effect
(c) The reaction is shown in some change of personality or character.

In every case, regardless of the type, the reaction can be traced to the thing which the character now affected by it set in motion. The cause and effect, the crises, the surprise and suspense of the dramatic form, all these attributes serve but to heighten and bring out the effect of this reaction.

Examples of Reaction

In "The Whispering Chorus," John Trimble, a hounded criminal, while fishing for the food that will keep him from starvation, pulls in a corpse which he finds resembles himself so closely that he can change clothes with the body, transferring his identity to the dead man, so that John Trimble shall, thereafter, be known as dead. He executes the transfer of identity; but later he is arrested and placed on trial for the murder of John Trimble, himself. He has two wofully serious alternatives: he must stand trial for the murder of a man who still lives or he must reveal his true identity and let the law take its toll from John Trimble, criminal.

Here, clearly, is the reaction upon this man of

*Photoplay Making, 1915.

something which he has himself set in motion. This is the specifically dramatic material of the photoplay.

The reaction upon John Trimble is both physical and mental; the law has seized his body, and torturing regrets, doubts and fears have taken possession of his mind.

A purely physical reaction is found in the melodramatic example of the villain who drinks the wine he has poisoned for another. A purely mental reaction may be found in the sense of loss which comes to George Sylvester when Anne passes into the arms of her lover. A reaction upon character is seen in Anne's renounced ambition.

Reaction, the essentially dramatic substance, whether in the material of life or drama, will be found in all those photoplays which are based on essentially dramatic material. Although this reaction is a part of all fiction whose material is basically dramatic, yet by far the greater part of fiction lacks the dramatic treatment or form necessary to render it fully effective. The effects of a story are not so vivid and forceful, not so excruciatingly appealing or harrowing, as the effects of a photoplay, even though both mediums employ exactly the same material in any given case. And this, of course, brings us to a consideration of dramatic **FORM** in the photoplay.

THE DRAMATIC FORM

The photodrama may employ essentially dramatic material, heightened and accentuated by the dramatic form, or, on the other hand, it may use undramatic material and depend entirely

upon its form for effectiveness. Only the former class of photoplays is truly dramatic; for the form is but an empty shell without the essence, the flesh and blood of drama.

The pictures in the mind of the photoplay-wright, to which reference has been made in a previous chapter, are not ordinarily dramatic in their primary form. They contain, probably, many characters, places, events, nuances of emotion, and the like, not practicable in the photoplay, or, at least, not capable of being shown in one play of the required length. It becomes the business of the scenarist to simplify or DRAMATIZE them in external form, whether for a synopsis or continuity. This process of dramatization is one not natural to the conscious mind, for the fiction form may be called the natural form. But, in our dreams,* we dramatize our wishes and experiences; and this is why our dreams, even when we remember them, are often unintelligible to us; we have so simplified, symbolized and changed our mental material that we no longer recognize it when awake.

The dramatic method of shaping material resembles in its simplification our dream methods. It is the method which selects a sequence of acutely critical incidents, those most susceptible of dramatic effect, knits them together by immediate cause and effect, in an order by which the unexpected turns or developments are constantly being "sprung" on the spectator with the resultant shocks of surprise, so that the succeeding crises are not fully removed or settled until the climax

*See the works on psycho-analysis of Tridon and others.

of the play and its disentanglement; thus, the suspense is maintained in all the action until the issues are finally resolved to a satisfactory close or solution.

The most distinguishing thing about this form is its compactness and continual suspense and shocks of surprise, following one upon another in rapid succession. Life's plotlessness and diffusion are eliminated by the strategy and tactics of the photoplay; events undergo remarkable changes of proximity in time and place, characters are seen to develop startling alterations of mentality or emotion in a short period. The action is dynamic.

Thus, the dramatic method, the form, is opposed to the quieter, more leisurely, looser form of fiction. Fiction may amble, digress, moralize, become verbose; it may anticipate future events by looking ahead in the story, or it may revert back to the beginning of the story, thus leaving the reader suspended at that point until the author has come up with him again; at any point of its action it may digress or become circuitous.

Photodrama cannot avail itself effectively of such loose and circumlocutionary methods. To anticipate future events is to rob the play of its surprise and suspense; to revert back to past events is to break in upon the chain of critical scenes and remove the spectator's mind from the poignant excitement of the story. His attention once diverted, he can never again at that sitting be aroused to the same pitch of interest and attention; the effects sought cannot be fully realized because of a violation of a fundamental law of the mind, i. e., that the progressive interest

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

of onlookers must be kept in the channel of its greatest momentum, and that once deflected from that course the momentum is retarded or destroyed. Long fiction, requiring several sittings, may in a manner regain some of the momentum lost; but the photoplay cannot avail itself of this advantage. For this reason, perhaps, the serial photoplay was never really popular; it broke in upon the dramatic continuity and failed of effect.

Thus, the dramatic form is seen to be peculiar in its compactness, causation, critical events, rapid succession of shocks to the nerves, maintained suspense, harrowing force. Whenever fiction abandons its looser methods for the dramatic form, we have dramatic fiction. A well-constructed synopsis is dramatic fiction — that is why so much stress is laid upon dramatic form for the writer of detailed synopses. A short-story may be written dramatically and many of them are; but many stories said to be dramatic are merely terse and lead up to a climax. A mere climax does not, of course, constitute a drama.

Workshop Examples for Beginners

For examples of essentially dramatic material turn to the detailed synopsis. In accordance with our principle of reaction, we see that Anne's choice early in the story brings upon her all the subsequent dangers and emotions of her career. If she had chosen differently, she would have set in motion a different train of circumstances. Maribelle's choice brings about the reaction of failure to achieve her aim, followed by the reaction of happiness in marriage. George Sylvester finds that his heinous plot to possess Anne costs him

TO VIVU
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the only woman he has ever loved — a realization which comes too late. The final reaction of the play is Anne's recognition of the potency of love. It is brought about elementally by the course of George, whose stratagem she penetrates. But the cumulative effects of the action have an influence in deciding her final choice.

The reactions of this synopsis are not of the more harrowing types of the true melodrama. Perhaps the most poignant situation, from that viewpoint, is the voluntary bargain of Anne with George by which she is to marry him, she thinking that he wants to marry her and he not being in a position to demur without disclosing his true purpose. Here is the beginning of the reaction upon him of the circumstances he has set in motion; Anne likewise has set in motion something that shall later react on her.

It may be seen that the form of the synopsis is dramatic. It presents and develops the material in accordance with the principles of dramatic effect. The only wanting factor is the division into scenes arranged according to a dramatic sequence or juxtaposition (to be taken up in Chapter 15).

In the continuity, we find essentially dramatic material. The final reactions lie in the arrest of Duane, who is reaping the harvest of his own planting, and the restored love of Helen for Doctor Howard. The student may easily trace the various reactions and their inceptions to the causes and effects of the plot. As to the form, it is completely dramatic in that it is a scenario with scenes arranged in dramatic sequence. It is not desirable at this time to discuss this sequence,

but merely to call attention to the general form and effect.

PHOTOPLAY EXAMPLES

In "Hail the Woman," the material of the story is dramatic, although trite. The reaction upon David of his secret marriage and silence is certain from the beginning. Much of the suspense and surprise was forfeited by the hackneyed material; the final reaction is foreseen by the alert onlooker.

In a spectacle such as "Salome," the dramatic essence of the material is enhanced by the form, despite the large amount of episode (often superfluous) common to such productions. Other spectacles, such as "Civilization," are too largely episodic to maintain a true dramatic effect, however potent may be their pictorial charm or philosophical interest.

In "A Tale of Two Cities," adapted for the screen, historical material was made dramatic by a story essentially conformable to the principles of dramatic effect. While largely episodic, such a play need not lose its effectiveness as drama.

FICTION EXAMPLES

By contrast, a clearer idea of the dramatic may be had, if we will examine carefully material which is UNDRAMATIC. The following examples are discussed for the enlightenment of the beginner who essays to write synopses; and he should study them with care.

"Rip Van Winkle," as written by Irving, is a good illustration of the undramatic story, undramatic of material and treatment. It is told in a

purely chronological sequence devoid of all approach to dramatic effect.

"A Passion in the Desert" is a story-within-a-story. It may be cited to exemplify the undramatic form and episodic material wanting in plot. The principle episode is dramatic, if we accept the personification of the panther and think of her death as the result of something that she set in motion.

Conan Doyle's, "A Study in Scarlet," is a type of the undramatic novel. The inner story might contain the seeds of drama, but the final reaction is lodged in the outer or superficial story. The treatment is remote from dramatic effect.

On the other hand, there are examples of stories treated in a dramatic manner. De Maupassant's "The Necklace," may be said to be potentially dramatic in material and form. We may think of it as the critical conditions of a photoplay with the discovery of the necklace's true value as the excitant. From that point on a good play might be written to show the reactions. Of course, complication is needed. The final surprise of this story which is concealed from the reader till the last (a typical fiction trick), does not rob the remaining material of its potential value. "The Piece of String" is another story with dramatic material.

Summing up, then, a dramatic story needs a plot controlled by a formula of three terms; it needs the dramatic treatment or form which we have considered in this chapter; it should exhibit reaction as its chief effect. The photoplay which lacks any of these is not wholly dramatic, although potentially it may be a very effective product.

ANALYTICAL AND PLAYWRITING EXERCISES

1. Turn back to Chapter 1. Is the second paragraph of Test One dramatic as to material? Why? Is the first paragraph dramatic? State reasons for your answer.

2. Revise one of your own plots so that it shall be dramatic. Ascertain if its material is dramatic.

3. Develop the revised plot into a synopsis, following the dramatic form as best you know how. Use a working continuity as a basis for the synopsis.

4. Take De Maupassant's, "The Piece of String" and write a synopsis, using the incidents and characters just as they are in the story; but develop it in the dramatic form. Make any changes you deem necessary in the sequence of the story.

5. From the screen choose several examples of photoplays which exhibit reaction, mental, physical or of the personality or character.

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER X

SUSPENSE, EXCITEMENT AND CRISIS

Within the past decade experiments in dramatic technique have been popular in a circle of recalcitrant authors, who, confusing technique with conventions, set out to create a "new" or "free" technique so-called. It cannot be said in truth, however, that their efforts have aroused any permanent interest on the part of the public. Curiosity is always excited by any innovation, and the public takes it up until the marvel has worn off, as it generally has in a short period. The stage received its inspiration for a "new" technique from the moving pictures; and the circle was completed when the experiments extended to the screen.

Experiments in the structure of any art are good in that they often lead to improvements in the existing methods; but claims for a "new" technique of the photoplay have not been justified by time, which settles all such debates with finality. The technique of the screen-drama is based on unchanging laws of the mind and, hence, cannot undergo any more radical mutation than the minds to which it is directed.

This matter of minds brings up one of the most vital questions of photoplay writing, namely:

what is the attitude of a spectator toward a play he is witnessing; what are his mental processes; how does the play appeal to his interest.

Let us imagine the ordinary spectator (though there are none, in fact), as he takes his seat in the photoplay-house. He seats himself warped in a certain frame of mind which we may call "curiosity." He is mildly curious as to the nature of the story to be shown, as to the issues to be raised by the action, as to the results. He is not yet interested but is willing to be, if the play carries him out of himself without effort and makes him assume an interest.

Manifestly, it is the obligation of the photo-dramatist to stimulate his curiosity, to appeal to him by the characters of the drama and the preliminary circumstances it sets forth. Following this initial state of mind, if the play is dramatic as it should be, a more dynamic mental condition arises in the spectator, i. e., **DESIRE**. He no longer is merely curious, he begins to take an active interest in the story, perhaps even an acute interest. In other words he begins to **PARTICIPATE** in the action.

This participation can be entered into only when the spectator imagines himself in the place of the chief characters, or one of them, living the events, suffering the emotions, achieving the deeds shown on the screen. To put it somewhat differently, certain people are presented to him in certain dynamic circumstances; and these together excite in him an anticipation — no matter how vague and inaccurate — of some probable events about to take place, some outcome shortly

to be realized, together with a desire that they shall, or shall not, be attained.

Coincidentally with desire, **DOUBT** or uncertainty takes its place in the mental and emotional complex of the onlooker; for, apart from doubt over the outcome, there can be no suspense and no dramatic effect. Excitement over a play lies largely in the doubts raised over the issues as they transpire; crises are but critical moments of magnified or intensified **DOUBT**.

We may say that **SUSPENSE** is made up of desire that a given event shall or shall not occur, offset by doubt as to the result, or as to the means by which it will be accomplished or prevented. The skilled photoplaywright contrives to throw a doubt about the issues, keeping the audience in uncertainty. In the chapter on Obstacles, we shall examine more closely into the machinery of doubt; how impediments skilfully raised cast a cloud of uncertainty over the events, which is maintained until the psychological moment of relief arrives.

In a previous chapter it has been stated that the dramatic object is to keep the interest of the onlooker in the channel of its greatest momentum. We may now ask what this channel is and why momentum is retarded by deflecting interest from this particular channel.

First, let us look at the matter summed up for the sake of clarity. In order that a spectator participate in the action of a photoplay, take sides with certain characters or against them, live the events, love, hate, laugh, or cry with the people of the story, it is necessary, at the outset, to change his idle curiosity into desire. This is

done by the opening incidents or scenes of the photoplay. As soon as the APPEAL of the characters and their relationship has reached him, he is ready to enter into the action, to share their lives, happiness, or sorrow for an hour.

But now, that suspense may be created, the events must bring about some change in relations, some obstacle, and cast some doubt upon the happenings desired by the onlooker. The beautiful heroine shall not have her man without trouble, for there is the cruel stepfather who proposes to have something to say about it! But cannot they elope and live in happiness? No. For now the playwright discloses, at the critical moment, that the hero's old mother owes the hardboiled step-father a sum of money which she cannot pay. If her son runs off with the girl, the mortgage on the old homestead shall, most certainly, be foreclosed, and the old mother will be without a shelter over her head. And thus we see the beginning of the crises, excitement, suspense; the sharing of the lives of the characters by the spectator, who can no longer look unmoved upon the issues raised nor stand aloof from the incidents. This whirlpool of suspense, with its attendant emotional excitement and moments of crisis, into which our spectator is swept by the currents of the action, is what has been referred to as the CHANNEL OF GREATEST MOMENTUM. Once in it, he must be kept in it until the end, or the play will fail of its effect.

The skilled author contrives to introduce his facts and incidents, one at a time, and in the order in which they will arouse the keenest desire that certain things happen, without for a moment

entirely relaxing the uncertainty of the matter or disclosing the ultimate outcome.

The author's frame of mind, while arranging his story, keeps pace in a manner with the hypothetical mind of an audience. The author should ever keep in view the probable effect which his characters and their relationship will have on the audience, calculating at each pivotal turn of the events the direction of the greatest interest and uncertainty felt by the spectators. He wants to maneuver the minds of his onlookers into this channel and keep it there.

With the probable susceptibilities of the audience in view, he asks himself: Can they understand my characters and their relationships; can they understand this scene; shall it interest them and induce a desire to have happen what follows in the action; have I a sufficient obstacle to cast a doubt over the issues? When I show the debt on the old home and to whom owed, shall it arouse the pity of the audience? And thus he questions every turn of events and strives to check the mental reactions of the audience.

He must not disclose too many facts at any one time, or he will destroy the suspense by letting the audience into the secret of future events ahead of time. On the other hand, if he fails to disclose all the facts necessary to explain any scene or event, the audience cannot fully enter into it, as there is something missing, something lacking. For the audience must be allowed to know all facts essential to its emotional enjoyment of the play, even though the facts are unknown to the people of the story.

Suspense is, therefore, the result of skilful

arrangement and coadjustment of the incidents and details, relationships and changes of relationship of the story, of arousing and maintaining the tensity of desire and doubt. To relax the suspense too soon produces an anti-climax or weak ending; to fail to arouse suspense at the outset prevents the audience from sharing in the play; the spectators remain aloof, detached, when they should be deeply immersed in the issues, forgetful of self and the world of reality, living the action for a brief hour. An audience cannot live a play, even for a few minutes, which is not based on the laws of its mentality, which does not offer it the emotional outlet it paid at the window to experience.

The various elements or steps in the creation and continuance of suspense are listed, as follows:

(a) Curiosity must be turned into a desire on the part of the spectator that certain incidents occur or do not occur.

(b) Doubt over the issues involved must be set up and maintained.

(c) The spectator must be led to share in the events, even by being taken into partnership by the playwright.

(d) Once turned into the channel of suspense, the mind of the spectator should not be deflected from its course.

(e) The future events should not be disclosed in advance, stripping the action of its surprise and tension.

(f) No important secret should be kept bodily from the audience, but sufficient facts should be

disclosed to make participation in the action possible. The facts may be kept from the characters of the play without impairing the effect.

Points not thus far explained will be cleared up in the following paragraphs.

A photoplay such as, "The Lane That Had No Turning" illustrates the long-established dramatic form and methods. And this brings us to the opening remarks of this chapter; for, if this long-established dramatic form is satisfactory, why is there any necessity for a "new" technique? There is, in truth, not only little necessity, but it is a fact that a new technique is impossible. The same old laws of the mind must be respected by the new methods; but too often new methods are mere innovations without a true purpose. They may be compared to the freakish development in certain lines of animal life just before the animal forms become extinct. The new technique fails because it ignores the mentality of the spectator; as soon as the marvel of the innovation has worn off, the public tires of it and returns to the form which enables it most keenly to participate in the mimic lives and emotions of the shadowy people of the screen.

Reference was made in a preceding chapter to the fiction device of keeping a secret from the audience until the end of the story, when it is suddenly and unexpectedly disclosed. Since many efforts to achieve a new technique have been predicated on this same hoary artifice of the paper-covered novel, we may well notice its variance from the method of true suspense outlined in the next few paragraphs.

The chief advantage of the dramatic method is

that it takes the audience into partnership or collaboration with the author. This it does by allowing the audience to know certain facts not known to the characters in the play. From this superiority of viewpoint the audience's emotions are intensified. Not only does the audience experience the emotions of the characters, but it also experiences added emotions brought on by its knowledge of facts unknown to the people of the play.

For instance, in "Mme. X," that poignant melodrama, we know that the young attorney who is so eloquently defending the sodden old woman is her own son. This is no secret from the audience; but it is unknown to the woman on trial until just before the end. By its knowledge of this fact the audience experiences two-fold emotions, — those of the characters in the situation, and those consequent on the knowledge that mother and son are within arm's length and yet do not embrace after a separation of many years, that they hear each other's voices and yet are unheeding, that they look and yet do not see the truth. Shall the mother ever clasp her son in her arms? Can the boy admit the wreck before him to the shrine of motherhood in his heart? In these questions lies the suspense brought on by the disclosure of facts to the audience which are concealed from the characters.

Had the woman's identity been kept from the spectators till the end and then "sprung" with explosive suddenness, fully half the emotional effect would have been stripped from the play; and the final shock of surprise would have created an impression the reverse of that at which it

aimed. The audience would have gone home with its collective mind in a state of bewilderment, asking vainly, What was it all about and why was not something said about that woman's identity sooner?

And, for the reasons outlined, the fiction device of a story within a story, and other like methods, lift the minds of readers or spectators from the channel of greatest momentum. No sooner has the outer story induced the reader into some semblance of interest than his mind is deflected by the inner story, and he must begin all over again. If the outer story has revealed the termination of the events, as is often the case, the effect is impaired and no true interest can be taken in the inner story. This example illuminates the previous assertion that once directed in the channel of greatest interest, the mind of the spectator (or reader) must be retained therein; to divert it is to vitiate the suspense.

In this connection, we may ask ourselves how much of a secret can be kept from an audience without enfeebling the dramatic effect of a photoplay. To be sure, the characters of the piece can be kept in the dark throughout the action — that often adds to the suspense; but can an important secret be kept in its entirety from the audience? Let us examine one of the specimens of the "new" technique, which attempted to retain its secret from the onlookers without vitiating the effect.

A young man at the home of his sweetheart endeavors to repair the clasp of her necklace, which is broken. When the young people are called to another room, they leave the necklace

on a table in full view, but when they return to the room where it was left, it has disappeared. The audience has NOT been shown how it disappeared or what has become of it. The young man is suspected by the girl's father, who takes police to his room at a boarding house and there finds the necklace in a dresser drawer. The youth denies the theft but is sent to prison. At the prison, the convicts exchange yarns over the most foolish things they have ever done. One relates how he stole a necklace and brought it to his boarding house, but, seeing policemen drive up to the house, he became frightened and placed it in the dresser drawer of a room next to his, thus shielding himself. The boy recognizes the story to be the explanation of the mystery which has sent him to prison and the matter is cleared up.

But, in order to make this kind of story effective, the secret had to be kept from the audience, and a story within a story resorted to. Furthermore, on the screen, "visioning back" or a reversion to things which have happened in the past (a bad device if used at any length) was perforce employed to carry the effect. This was deflecting to the interest of the onlookers. The audience could not participate in the lives of these characters, for it did not know who stole the necklace until the last. It could only wonder how the youth would be cleared, if innocent, for it was not shown clearly that he WAS innocent. The audience could not side with or against the characters, love and hate, desire and apprehend, because it did not possess the superior knowledge, the facts, necessary to make it a partner of the playwright.

Its emotional outlet was closed; and the final surprise fell short of its effect.

On the other hand, had it been shown how the necklace disappeared and found its way to the youth's room, had the audience been certain of his innocence, the matter would have assumed another aspect. An innocent young man would be made to suffer for the guilt of a crook in full view of the audience. The onlookers would have taken sides and participated in the action. Of course, there would have been no final shock of explosive surprise; but it is doubtful that such surprise is sufficient compensation for the loss of true suspense traceable to keeping a secret from the audience.

This is not to assert, though, that NO secret can be retained by the playwright, but merely that sufficient facts must be given the audience to enable it to participate in the action.

The writing of a synopsis is essentially dramatic, lacking but the continuity form to render it actable and filmable. Therefore, in writing a synopsis, the author must arrange his story to arouse and maintain suspense. He should imagine that the editor, who will read his script, is an audience at the playhouse. In this way he will be incited to tell his story dramatically.

PLAYWRITING EXERCISES

1. Select some example of a photoplay of great suspense and show how its effects are gained.
2. Select an example of one that lacks suspense and write out its weak points.

3. Take the detailed synopsis, "Moths and Candles" and from it write a continuity, as best you can, maintaining the suspense of the scenes.

4. Take a synopsis you have written and test it for suspense. Make any changes which shall improve the suspense at any point.

5. Can you keep all of an important secret from an audience? Cite examples of successful devices.

6. Can you invent a new technique for the photoplay?

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER XI

FORETOKENING CERTAIN EVENTS

No one in his right mind would contend that the principles of dramatic photoplay making need be supported by personal authority. Grounded as they are in human psychology, proved as they have been in the plays of the best photoplaywrights, they appeal for authority to common sense. They are not offered as the IPSE DIXIT of a "movie" oracle, nor the "bag of tricks" of an inferior practitioner, nor the mysterious means to success of a charlatan. Photoplay writing is a process of thinking, of dramatic ratiocination. These principles are the preferred methods of thought, the body of criteria, some handed down from the parent drama of the stage, some the original contributions of experienced screen authors; they underlie the effective practice of the art. In other words, they are the A, B, C, of effective dramatic composition.

For all that, the principles are not so self-evident that anyone may hurry over these pages and, when the end of the book has been reached, find himself by an egregious growth a fully developed synoptist.

With this mental attitude, let us now consider in brief what former chapters have shown us.

We have seen that a photoplay is based on a formula of three terms; that a moral problem

directs the events; that there should be a certain kind of plot; that the events have a causal connection; that there is a certain form by which dramatic effects are attained; that suspense is engendered by certain methods.

We have now to consider how certain unexpected incidents, certain shocks of surprise, are foreshadowed and softened of effect by a method which shall be called **FORETOKENING**, a method long known to dialogue dramatists as **PREPARATION.**

Why is a sequence of events self-explanatory? Why do we understand, without explanation, the chain of occurrences in a photoplay?

It can be solely because each event prepares for the event that follows. Each incident of a series is, in this light, a foretokening of incidents yet to occur; and the total effect is understandable as long as nothing happens which has not been foretokened. That this is so may be seen by weighing each event of a photoplay singly to ascertain its dependence upon the other incidents.

But while, theoretically, we find this to be true, we discover that, in nearly every photoplay, there are occurrences which, if they are to be explanatory, must be foreshadowed by certain exceptional methods now to be considered as a distinct phase of playwriting.

For example, if in your story a homicide is to be committed with a knife, the property of a certain character, pains must be taken earlier in the action to show and identify this knife and its owner; else when the killing shall have occurred, the spectators will not understand the significance of the knife found beside the body.

Again, if a personage of the play is to die suddenly in a given scene, it must be made clear earlier in the events that he suffers from a weak heart or apoplexy, or the like, so that, when the moment of his demise arrives, there may be no doubt as to the CAUSE of death.

What Foretokening Is and Its Methods

Other arts employ methods of preparing or foreshadowing effects, which might be abrupt if introduced without preparation.

In music, as an instance, we observe a foretokening effect, when, in passing from one chord to another, especially if one is in a different key, it is customary to have a tone in each chord the same, so that the ear may, in a sense, be prepared by this foretokening of the harmonic change.*

In the short-story and the novel, methods of preparing the reader for certain oncoming events are in frequent use; and these partake of the nature of dramatic foretokening, although the tactics used may be different. The essential purpose is, however, in all these arts the same.

Returning to the photodrama, it may be said that the method of foretokening an event is to introduce, at some appropriate point preceding the event, a scene or incident in which some hint (if merely the display of an object), some premonition, some omen of the future is deftly brought out, so that later the onlookers remember the detail and, by its aid, explain the foretokened happening. Thus, when we are shown the knife with which a

*Taken from Genesis of Art Form, 1908.

homicide is to be executed, we cannot fail to recognize it in the subsequent scene.

Foretokening an incident, in this sense, means to "plant" or place unobtrusively a detail or incident at a preceding point of the play where it stands as foreknowledge of a later occurrence.

In the story, "Merton of the Movies," the final surprise which reveals to Merton that he has been making satirical comedies, when he thought he was doing something "worth while," is carefully foretokened by the strange conduct of the girl and her employer, as well as the peculiarity of the scenes they were engaged in "shooting." The discovery is prepared for in a natural manner because of these premonitory details.

Types of Preparation

There are several types of preparation, as follows:

(a) Objective identification; physical preparation.

(b) A trait of character that foretokens a certain deed or presages certain motives.

(c) Explanatory — that explains some mechanism or device to the spectators.

As an instance of the first, we all think of the knife or the weak heart. In "A Romance of the Redwoods," the doll that played so great a role had to be identified early in the play.

As to the second, Merton's reaction to the trick played on him is foreshadowed in the traits his character developed early in the story.

As to the third, we may find an example in the photoplay, "The Black Hole of Glenranald." In

this story, supposedly laid in Australia, numerous bandits infest the vicinage in which a certain bank is situated, the boldest of these being known as "Stingaree." The bank officials secretly plan to capture this malefactor, should he ever make so bold as to raid their institution, by the construction of a trap-door giving into a roomy hole beneath. It was necessary to prepare the audience for subsequent happenings by showing the location, purpose and operation of the trap. That this might have been accomplished undramatically through an exhibition of the trap for the audience's obvious benefit, is in the nature of a truism. But, in order to encompass it in an indirect and unostentatious manner (the truly dramatic manner) the problem was solved in this way: A young clerk, when leaving the bank for the evening, overlooks a packet of papers he intended to take away with him, and is compelled to return for them. Immediately after his first departure, we are shown the owner and cashier tinkering with a strange-looking apparatus under the telling window. What is it? The action is now switched to the forgetful clerk, who, discovering his oversight, hastens back for the packet. He knocks and is cautiously admitted, the owner and cashier evincing considerable uneasiness at this interruption. Following is the approximate order in which the scenes of preparation were shown:

Scene 12. Owner and his cashier are busy with apparatus under telling window. They appear to be in great fear of discovery.

Scene 13. Outside. Clerk discovers his oversight and hurries off to secure packet of papers.

Scene 14. Cut back to apparatus, etc. Same as 12.

Scene 15. Outside. Clerk arrives at bank and knocks at door.

Scene 16. Cashier and owner greatly perturbed. They peep through a window, which is heavily barred, before admitting clerk.

Scene 17. Same as 15. Clerk knocking on door with some impatience. Door opens slightly and Cashier's head is seen. Clerk explains and is admitted reluctantly.

Scene 18. In front of telling window. Packet of papers on window shelf. Clerk picks it up with gesture of relief and is about to make exit, when owner, who has been crouching down out of sight behind window, raises his head and is seen by clerk, who asks why he is hiding. Cashier indicates with annoyance that owner must give some sort of explanation of his actions and they decide to divulge secret trap to clerk.

Cut-In Leader: "Some day this bold Stingaree might try to rob our bank, so we have prepared a trap for him."

Back to scene. Clerk is interested and asks questions.

Scene 19. Back of telling window. They show him details of mechanism with some pride.

Scene 20. Cashier illustrates use of trap by placing empty chair on it and motioning owner, who is back of window, to spring it.

Scene 21. Close-up of owner's hand pulling a lever in the mechanism.

Scene 22. Outside window. Same as 20. Trap door falls suddenly, precipitating empty chair through floor into regions below. Etc.

It is obvious, from these scenes, that the capture of the bandit will be readily understood after the spectators have seen the trap work and know how effective it is.

From the examples given, it should be noted that, wherever foretokening is necessary, it is to render explanatory some event further on in the action. Perhaps the event would be too abruptly surprising if "sprung" without preparation; or perhaps it would not be natural or plausible unless we had some hint or warning (cleverly disguised at the moment) of the impending occurrence. The hint skilfully "planted" in the beginning of the play later makes common cause with the foretokened event, joins or coalesces with it, and thereby prevents impairment of the effect, either because of misunderstanding on the part of the audience or from lack of sufficient emphasis.

Thus, we observe that the foreshadowing of events leads to a chain of effects, which becomes fully active only when some prior happening is made to UNITE with and gain double significance from an event coming after it in the concatenation of effects. FORETOKENING is, therefore, not only essential to a clear comprehension of quite unexpected, or even, for that matter anticipated, events, but is, as well, a strengthening of impressions by coalescence and a REPETITION that acts upon the mind much as bearing down on the stamp deepens the image in the sheet of wax.

What Lack of Preparation Causes

If there is any outstanding rule to be drawn from what has gone before, it may be stated as follows:

In every continuity and, generally, in synopses, every incident that will not be understandable to the spectators unless prepared for in advance, must be foretokened in accord with some one of the methods heretofore indicated; and this foretokening is obligatory upon the scenarist, because of the minds of the spectators, — who reason from events back to causes, and who cannot grasp the significance of such events as we have seen, unless they have been carefully prepared for by the playwright.

The kind of effects that results from a want of preparation in the events of a photodrama, may be inferred from the ensuing outline of a screen melodrama.

"Sure-shot" Andrews is a two-gun man. He loves the daughter of the county Sheriff, a wealthy rancher. Hold-up men have perpetrated several successful robberies in the vicinity, always escaping to the hills on horseback. A hold-up occurs at the bank in the nearby settlement and a hat is found there (the hat had not been previously shown). A reward is offered for the owner of the hat. When next Sure-shot visits the Sheriff's daughter, he recognizes the hat as one of his own! The girl, knowing of the reward, warns him to say no more about the hat. He proposes and is accepted and they arrange to elope. But the Sheriff finds a spur which he identifies as Sure-shot's (we have never seen it closely) and resolves to watch his daughter. He hears her receive a message over the radiophone. That night Sure-shot arrives and is met by the girl. They mount and ride off pursued by the Sheriff and several of his men. Sure-shot turns off the main road and

rides to the military post not far away. Here airplanes are kept, and Sure-shot and the girl, unobserved, get into one and Sure-shot pilots it away to Denver, safe from the irate Sheriff.

Tactics of Preparation

The manner of accomplishing the preparation of an event should be unobtrusive, indirect and apparently **PURPOSELESS**. It is an artful method apparently **ARTLESS**.

Thus in "A Romance of the Redwoods," the old doll is hurled into a corner by a petulant girl, where we see it lying in crumpled neglect; but this suffices to identify it and prepare for its future use. At the moment, the close-up of the doll seems to have no purpose; later we remember it and it aids us to understand the events.

Similar tactics are employed in the display and identification of all objects which are to play an important role in subsequent occurrences. There is no rule as to the variations that may be made; they depend on the material.

As to character preparation, it may be developed by scenes of episode which foretoken later scenes. The personage of the photoplay must show by his own conduct that he is the kind of person to do certain things in a certain way or in given circumstances.

In the continuity every type of foretokening must be employed where needed. In the synopsis, objective preparation may often be assumed, as it shall surely be supplied in the scenario; but character and explanatory preparation must be indicated, in order that the synopsis be understandable to the editor in all its essential parts.

This much is obligatory upon the synoptist, just as it is obligatory upon the part of the novelist or story writer.

Workshop Illustrations

In the detailed synopsis, we observe that the preparation of character receives much attention. We are shown that George Sylvester is somewhat of a rake long before he tries to seduce Anne. We see that Anne is very courageous from the manner in which she invades the actor's rooms. Thus, her actions at George's summer home are foretokened. There are other instances of preparation in this synopsis which the student may find for himself.

The college pin found by Arthur in the final scenes of the synopsis is not foretokened, because the author takes for granted the fact that, in the continuity, objective identification of the pin early in the action would surely be made. It might, however, have been specifically mentioned earlier in the synopsis. This indicates the difference in judgment displayed in the work of experienced writers. In the present instance, the story is understandable without the identification; and the author assumed that the continuity writer would make adequate preparation.

In the continuity of Chapter 23, we may find other examples of foretokening. For instance, we know that Duane is a coward because we have seen his distaste for the uniform of his country. His subsequent attempt to bribe the draft board is understandable in the light of preceding episodes. There are other instances which the beginner should discover for himself.

Some writers fill their synopses full to overflowing with such details as preparation; others make their stories clear and forceful and leave everything to be inferred. The idea is to make the story understandable in all its parts, irrespective of the amount of detail necessary to accomplish this result.

Analytical and Playwriting Exercises

1. Select from the screen two or three photoplays that show preparation. Point out the foretokened surprises.
2. List the various kinds of preparation shown.
3. Take a continuity written by you and test it for preparation. Foretoken all surprising events and identify all objects that are important to the action.
4. Take a synopsis you have written and foretoken all manifestations of character which need preparation.
5. Cite any photoplay which fails to foretoken a surprise. What effect does the oversight have?
6. Do you think that the college pin of Anne should have been mentioned earlier in the synopsis? Why?
7. Can you make a photoplay self-explanatory without foretokening certain events, such as those we have studied in this chapter? How would you accomplish it?
8. In writing a scenario from "Father's Final 'Fix,'" what portions of the story would have to be foretokened objectively, or what objects would have to be identified, if any? Why?

Modern Photoplay Writing · Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER XII

SURPRISE,* OR THE UNFORESEEN

Recurrent allusions have been made in past chapters to dramatic surprise as it affects the spectators at the photoplay-house. The principle by which, in the incidents of a photodrama, surprise is engendered and DISPLODED (there is no better word) with the resultant nervous thrill in the onlookers, has been named the UNEXPECTED or the UNFORESEEN. There is no tenet of dramatic law and effect more important to the photoplay craftsman; and it is no wonder, then, that the present chapter will be devoted entirely to illuminating this principle of the unforeseen.

Exactly what, in a photoplay, IS the unforeseen, the unexpected, the SURPRISING? We cannot fully answer this question by recourse to any one definition or conception of the matter. Like all laws grounded in psychology, the principle is as large as the human mind. At the same time, however, we may consider several views of the subject by way of an introduction to its study.

Mr. Clayton Hamilton appears to think that surprising which is concealed from the audience. Mr. William Archer places great stress upon

*This is a subject on which most of the manuals have something to say. See theatrical and Photoplay bibliography in the appendix.

taking an audience unawares with a plot new or novel as to situations or details. W. T. Price regards surprise as something absolutely new or unlooked-for arising from the relations and conditions of a dramatic action. None of these more than scratches the surface of the principle; but they all agree in that NOVELTY or NEWNESS of some kind, or by some means, is taken as an essential quality.

With these as a preface, it may be said that the unforeseen of a photoplay is of several distinct types:

(a) The surprise lurks in unexpectedness of events.

(b) The surprise is traceable to unforeseen developments or manifestations of character.

(c) The surprise is due largely to the means, details or tactics by which things are brought about.

(d) The surprise is caused by any combination of the first three.

As an example of the first, "The Whispering Chorus" surprises us by its events. The discovery of the body in the lake; the transfer of identity; these are unexpected and, therefore, surprising.

As to the second, Merton Gill's reaction to the trick played upon him in, "Merton of the Movies," is an apt illustration.

For the third, we may look to such a play as, "A Romance of the Redwoods," in which, when all seems lost for a certain character, he is saved by an old doll adroitly substituted for a baby. Here the incident itself is old, the character involved not at all unusual; but the stratagem,

the tactics, is surprising, unforeseen, effectively dramatic.

Practically all screen plays will furnish examples of varying combinations in the elemental types of unexpectedness. At this point it is unnecessary to cite specific instances, which will be forthcoming later on.

In view of these instances we may say that surprise should be classified as (a) major, (b) minor. Major surprise is that result attained when the incidents lead up to some explosive disclosure that bursts upon the spectators with the suddenness and shock of an avalanche. Major surprise of this, or of an analogous, kind, is found in all photoplays which hide some great secret from the spectator until the close of the action, or which build up to a startling and explosive incident as the COUP DE THEATRE of the piece, the culminating thrill at the climax or apex of the play.

When, in "The Whispering Chorus," John Trimble is arrested for his own murder, the novelty or unexpectedness of the event is disploded as a major surprise, carefully worked up to. Major surprise is generally employed in melodramas or photoplays of incident.

In photoplays of character or emotion, minor surprise generally has the ascendancy. In such a drama as "Lavender and Old Lace," the unforeseen element of the action lies mainly in the tactics and in the turns or twists of character. Minor surprise holds sway, and even the final revelation, — if such it can be called from the spectator's viewpoint — is bereft of any displosiveness; for we are interested only in the

reactions of character. Such a photoplay is one purely of emotion, as also might be said, with a few modifications, of "Way Down East" or "The Old Homestead."

Rare instances of craftsmanship occur in which the texture is enriched by a coalition of unexpectedness in the events and the tactics, both major and minor surprises. "Seven Keys to Baldpate," while it secreted its major surprise from the audience, was so unexpected of tactics and character reaction that its design may be upheld for the study, though not necessarily the slavish emulation, of the beginner. A melodrama of this sort, having no moral problem, no significance aside from entertainment, can carry surprise much further than is desirable or effective in the generality of productions. The novelty of such plays is superficial enough to pall on the spectators, if repeated too often at the theatre.

The Spectator's Mental Processes

Having seen something of the nature and classification of surprise, we will now scrutinize the methods by which the photoplaywright may, in synopsis or scenario, produce effects of surprise calculated to appeal to the spectators.

It is true, in a sense, that by far the larger part of a photoplay viewed for the first time is surprising because of newness or unfamiliarity. After the plot has been bruited about in newspapers and street-gossip, only the explicit means on which crucial turns of the action are pivoted remain sufficiently obscure to offer the photoplay-goer a real thrill of unexpectedness. Even where the general story is well known, as is the case

with most adaptations, the onlookers, having no previous inkling of the NEXUS of event with DETAIL, are assured those engrossing thrills of surprise consequent on the novelty of the play's TACTICS.

The mind of the spectator, when contemplating a dramatic narrative, naturally reaches forward from the immediate moment to future moments, which he is led to foresee and expect from the antecedent happenings. For illustration, if, early in the play, husband and wife are estranged, he may foresee, with an anticipation almost one with certainty, a scene of reconciliation in which all shall be explained away between them. This he is influenced to do by what is revealed in the preliminary conditions of the action. He looks forward into the future because there is at the moment, and has been previously, nothing that might tend to establish an unsurmountable obstruction to his forecast. Yet, even upon this basis, by what precise course of occurrence this scene will be brought to pass he cannot foretell; and he will be subjected, therefore, to the shocks of surprise ensuing in the interval, ere the expected moment shall have been consummated and the suspense relaxed.

Continuing our analogy, let us suppose that, as the action progresses, it is disclosed that the husband in his past life has had a number of cleverly hushed-up affairs with women of the class whose very mention lowers the voice of scandal to a whisper. This revelation promises to alter the status between husband and wife; for we shall presume that the wife has implicit trust in her husband's moral stamina. Shall not

this revelation prove an irrevocable barrier to any possible reconciliation? Now, he sees that what a moment ago was eagerly awaited, as something soon to be cleared away, is immersed in doubt. Only surprising incidents will henceforth liberate him from his uncertainty. On the other hand, had his anticipations been suddenly frustrated by an unforeseen event, which separated the couple forever, the surprise would have been due to his having been led to foresee the reverse of that which actually occurred.

Thus, it is seen that, if the spectator is led to anticipate certain events, the unforeseen lurks in happenings to the CONTRARY, or in the methods by which his preconceptions shall be realized.

It would be an error to infer, however, that all events which are unforeseen, are, of necessity, quite surprising. Many, in truth, are so naturally — so inevitably — the outcome of character and circumstance that they afford but a minor surprise. For examples go to current releases.

Application of the Unforeseen

As a principle of craftsmanship, the unforeseen may be applied in the writing of every synopsis or continuity. It is bound up with the suspense of the story. The author carefully marshals his incidents and details so as to suggest to the audience a certain result or outcome; then quite logically he brings to pass a different turn of events with the resultant shock of surprise. Or, if his plot is such as can be foreseen in spite of structure, he accomplishes his ends by novel or surprising means, offsetting conventional strategy by unusual tactics.

For an illustration of how the audience may be fooled by anticipation, take the photoplay, "The Loves of Anatol." In each episode the audience is incited to believe that the new "affair" will grow serious, yet each time there is a surprising termination.

In, "The Birth of a Nation," we know the result of the Civil War in advance; but the precise episodes, the exact vicissitudes of the characters, cannot be foreseen, and surprise is accordingly a constituent of the action.

Deceiving the Audience

Let it not be understood, from the foregoing, that to lead the spectators astray is to lie or deceive with deliberate intent. The spectator is influenced to foresee certain results by skilful suggestion—not by deliberate lies. Only a few types of drama (melodrama and farce) can stand the deliberate dramatic lie — and not always these! For this reason, the keeping of a secret from the audience is a risky and often ineffectual device.

Upon this subject Mr. Clayton Hamilton has written a few paragraphs worthy of thought.*

Says he: "Of course, the strongest argument against keeping a secret from the audience is that this procedure, in the admirable phrase of Mr. Archer, 'deprives the audience of that superior knowledge in which lies the irony of drama!. . .' It is not nearly so amusing to be fooled as it is to watch other people being fooled; and this would seem to be a fundamental fact of psychology. . . .

*Problems of the Playwright, 1917.

"But another argument against keeping a secret from the audience is that, in order to do so, it is nearly always necessary to tell deliberate lies to lead the audience astray. . . .

"The pattern of surprise (meaning that in which the motif is a secret retained from the onlookers) is available only for farces and for melodramas, in which the INCIDENTS (emphasis the author's) are all that count and the characters are secondary. To deceive the audience successfully in high comedy or in tragedy would require a falsification that would consign the play to ruin."

The reason for the preceding assertion* is not far to seek; for in a serious photoplay, a play of significance, the spectators demand that they be treated seriously by the author. Failure to do so inevitably produces a feeling of disgust and even resentment on the part of the audience. Few, indeed, are the cases which prove an exception to the rule.

It is reasonable to conclude that the spectator is most safely fooled by influencing him to make erroneous forecasts of the play's outcome and then introducing the surprise. Secrets also are most safely kept in this manner; for what he fails to guess, even when it is FORETOKENED for his benefit, remains a secret until it has been "sprung" with the displosive effect desired.

Lack of Surprise in Photoplays

A few examples of photoplays which lack surprise are not amiss, although the aspirant who

*That frequent reference should be made to theatrical writers, is an admission of the dramatic parentage of the celluloid drama, as well as a sad commentary on the general literature of photoplay writing.

may not have seen them shall have to find illustrations in current releases.

In a quiet and purely emotional photoplay such as "Lavender and Old Lace," there is little which might be recorded as of a surprising texture, either in the strategy or in the tactics. This type of story varies from the usual run of screen melodramas in that its predominant effects are not conditioned upon the rush of incidents, but rather on the play of character, the emotional reactions and complexes of its people. An explosive surprise, undiminished by delicate foretokening, would, if intruded into such a story, detract from its TONE, atmosphere or general effect.

All that has been said of that story applies to others of an analogous kind. The surprise of tactics is, as a rule, as far as unexpectedness need be carried. Where some major surprise is a part of the material, it should be softened and DEHANCED. Explosive surprises too often convey the tone of melodrama where the author intended an effect of higher quality. This observation may be sustained by analysis of the daily offerings at the leading photoplay-houses. The MORAL PROBLEM of a story, its tone and significance, these must in large measure govern the quality and method of its surprise.

Workshop Reflections

The detailed synopsis furnishes a number of examples of surprise, both major and minor. For instance, it is surprising that Jack's play is returned but understandable. This is a minor surprise. Again, it is unexpected that Anne should bargain with George over the play and

that he should take her up. But we understand her character and his position. When Anne discovers George's ruse at his country home, it is surprising but in accord with her intelligence; and her subsequent conduct is characteristic. We are surprised that Arthur arrives; it is an unexpected event. Anne's reaction and return to New York; Arthur's discovery; George's actions—all are surprising, but all have been foretokened or are characteristic. Thus, we may observe the several kinds of strategical surprise.

As to surprise of detail, that of tactics, George Sylvester's timely arrival early in the play, when Anne is hovering between two alternatives, is unexpected. While it is in the nature of chance, yet is a natural happening not devoid of plausibility; for it is usual in small towns for people to drop in without formality or announcement, especially if friends.

The comedy synopsis offers illustrations of surprise. There is the decision of the banker that he will go to the warehouse; the overpowering of the agents; the arrest of the plotters; the reappearance of the agents. All of these incidents are strategical surprises; all may be called major surprises, for they follow each other in rapid succession. As to tactical unexpectedness, the telephone conversation offers an instance.

In the scenario of Chapter 23, the major surprise toward which the incidents trend is the final discomfiture and elimination of Duane. It is unexpected that the doctor keeps the money offered him, but we can glimpse a purpose in it.

The tactics by which the climax is begun are as follows:

Scene 117. Same as 77 (Doctor's Private Office) Doctor Howard going through mail. Boy enters and tells Doctor someone is outside. Doctor indicates to send him in — goes back to mail — Enter Duane.

Doctor surprised — rises — Duane represses distaste — speaks urbanely — Doctor offers him seat — they gaze at each other as if taking measures — Doctor bids Duane state business — Duane speaks slowly at first — becomes more confidential and rapid of speech as he progresses — Doctor listens — puzzled — at first — then begins to understand — Duane takes large roll of money from clothing — lays it on desk — says —

CUT-IN: "IT IS YOURS IF YOU WILL EXEMPT ME FROM THIS INFERNAL DRAFT."

Back to scene. Doctor rises angrily — about to kick Duane from office — Duane makes swift motion as if to run from office — Doctor looks at him — remembers article in paper — gets paper from drawer — hands to Duane — questions him — Duane holds paper (flash paper).

INSERT (On Screen). Same newspaper item as formerly, announcing Helen's engagement to Duane.

Back to scene. Duane replies to Doctor's

questions — registers that article is true — he will marry her. Doctor evidently hit hard blow.

Scene 118. CLOSE-UP.
Duane winks aside. Registers he will tell a good lie — smiles craftily —

Scene 119. CLOSE-UP.
Doctor registers grief at first — then a suspicion dawns on him — gazes down at Duane keenly — Cut.

Scene 120. BACK TO 117.
Doctor reaches over and takes up money — fingers it — Duane delighted at success — Doctor turns to Duane, registers to leave money with him — he will think it over. Duane believes he has succeeded. Rises — smiles — signifies he will return — exit. Doctor looks at money — counts it — smiles — puts it in drawer, ponders — Cut.

In these scenes we sense a plan of some kind to encompass Duane's downfall; but as the doctor has committed one error in the past, we are not certain as to results. Only when the police are concealed are we sure of the plan and even then the outcome is not assured, for Duane may not return or he may become suspicious and cautious. Here the surprise is essentially of tactics; since we are mainly uncertain as to how the event will be brought about. The other unexpectedness is of character; for Mrs. Cabot must be reckoned with. Her change of heart is a surprise of character yet not illogical.

EXERCISES

1. From the screen select a photoplay and designate each distinctly surprising incident, indicating major and minor surprises.

2. Select a photoplay in which there are major surprises, whether of event or character, and change the incidents so as to destroy the unexpectedness without impairing the logic of the play.

3. Choose any short-story which has the elements of unexpectedness and from it develop a dramatic plot based on a formula of three terms, and a synopsis that brings out all latent surprises in the material.

4. Take De Maupassant's story, "The Necklace"* and write it as a synopsis, working up to the final surprise, but carefully foretokening the effect for the reader, so that it shall not be too explosive. Make it dramatic.

5. Can you write a photoplay in which every incident is a surprise? Would such a story have cause and effect?

*No exercise based on published stories should be submitted to producers except by arrangement with the publishers; original material is desired by producers.

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER XIII

IMPEDIMENTS, OBSTACLES AND ACCELERATORS

In Chapter 10, it was shown that the suspense of a photodrama is largely conditioned on doubt, which is induced by obstacles that rise to oppose the characters and shape the events. We may almost say that there is in life no aspiration of mankind, no undertaking, no accomplishment but what is opposed and shaped by obstacles. It is natural, therefore, to find in literature, especially in all forms of drama, an important role assigned to obstacle; for no story, especially no dramatic story, would have verisimilitude, no dramatic narrative would "hang together" and appeal to the emotions, were it not for the interplay of obstacles against the desires, aims, cravings and ambitions of its people. We may even go further and assert, "no obstacles, no photoplay."

The truth of that allegation will become vivid as we proceed to analyze obstacles in the photodrama. But there is yet another side of the matter to consider, namely, those **IMPULSIONS** that lead the characters of a story to aspire to, to undertake, to carry on or to achieve some enterprise or adventure. From the point of view of dramatic action, we shall term these impulsions, of whatever kind, the dramatic **ACCELERATORS.**

Without the necessary accelerators, obstacle would be victorious, and the play would not be written because the people would not DO anything; again, if the accelerators are disproportionately strong, the impediments are too weak to furnish the critical situations of a play. We see from the outset that the hero will conquer. Thus, there is in a photoplay a necessary balance between accelerators and obstacles to be preserved for the sake of dramatic effect.

Before we enquire further into this matter, let us define and classify obstacles and accelerators.

An obstacle in the photodrama is any event, fact, belief, attachment, emotion, inability or inhibition which checks, retards or prevents a character from undertaking or accomplishing anything in the story. On the other hand, an accelerator is some inspiration, desire, wish, belief, emotional complex, craving, ambition, passion or habit which spurs on a character to do, to be or to overcome something in the play.

Obstacles fall into several general classes, which are obvious but are mentioned here for those who have not as yet learned to think for themselves. There are physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual obstacles. A man's lack of strength, his fear of the law, his belief in God or his ignorance are examples in each class.

Accelerators fall into the same general classes, since they are but the reverse side of obstacles. A woman's beauty, her vanity, her trust in someone, or her prejudice furnish examples of each type.

The accelerators are, as we may infer, the MOTIVES that ACTUATE the personages of a story; and purely physical impulsions, such as pain,

hunger, and the like, also may be regarded as motives in this sense.

Accelerators occasionally dominate an entire story, remaining active from beginning to end; in other instances, an accelerator is dormant at first and toward the end becomes active, or it is in action at the outset and after a while grows quiescent. As an example of the dominant motive, consider "Dope" (Sax Rohmer), or "The Lane That Had No Turning." For an oscillating motive, advert to the synopsis and observe how Anne's love for Arthur is rekindled toward the story's close.

We may now revise our former ideas of a photoplay by the addition of obstacles and accelerators. We may say that a photodramatic action is a texture of situations brought about by the play and interplay of accelerators and impediments, with the resultant events, crises, surprises and tension, the changes of relationship and the final ingathering of the story's tangled threads.

That intangible something which in life causes and directs the behavior of men is well worth a brief outline for the student before we pass on to the craftsmanship of obstacles and impulsions.

What is the secret of men's conduct? What internal mechanism causes men to act in a certain manner or to do certain things?

Modern psychologists* attribute our every act to the mere power of an idea, a desire, pleasurable or painful. The idea itself causes action, provided there is no counter and inhibitory idea to offset or restrain the original impulse. Inhibi-

*See standard works on modern psychology and the branch called psycho-analysis.

tory ideas may be social, such as fear of the law, religious, or ethical. The man whose early training and education inculcated the necessary inhibitions, lives a decent life. But, on the other side, the man whose inhibitory ideas are dim, or missing, or whose emotions and impulses are too strong, may become a criminal of some kind or may, in innumerable ways, run counter to the established order and bring disgrace and ruin upon himself and others.

In this picture, daily life is seen to be a struggle between two sets of ideas, the original impulses and the restraints. We reach out a hand to grasp the fruit, but some counter idea of possible danger from poison or the like causes us to draw it back. It is conceived that this mechanism controls the whole course of human conduct.

Somewhat differently, the psycho-analysts regard human conduct as due to neuroses, suppressed wishes or desires which react on the personality. The neurotic feels inferior, he hates reality; he attempts to offset reality and his feeling of inferiority in various ways. He may become a murderer in order to remove some person who blocks his wishes, or he may be a gambler who tries by luck to offset the slower and more laborious achievements of reality.

The neurotic has desires which he represses and his repressions become complexes or centers of disturbance that alter his personality. He wants to experience love, let us say, but circumstances compel him to repress the desire. The inhibition may influence his behavior in curious ways, which the student is advised to

investigate. Many plays have a neurotic hero unsuspected by the author.*

Both these theories agree in placing the stimulus of conduct in an idea, a desire, a wish. Understanding the mechanism, we better understand the motives and obstacles of a play; as scenarists we assign better accelerators and impediments to our action, without in any way losing the dramatic effect. When in the corner of the screen, or after the "fade," we see the old mother, faded and benign, we know instantly what inhibitory ideas are thronging in the mind of the girl, who, among dissolute and inebriate companions, sits uneasy in the gay cafe. We understand the accelerator which, enabling her to conquer pride and timidity, demands that her escort shall immediately see her home. The whole mental and emotional complex is laid bare; it is explanatory because we, too, have been actuated in the same way.

Use of Obstacles in Photoplay Writing

To the craftsman the fact of most importance is the presence or absence of accelerators or impediments in his stories. As a rule, they should be sufficiently forceful and lifelike to justify the action of dramas; for comedy, especially farce, the more trivial or grotesque they are, the funnier. They must be present in some form and must balance off in order to make effective action.

Obstacles may be entirely independent of the wills of the people in a photoplay. Events, such as the riotous episodes in "Orphans of the Storm,"

* See works of Tridon, Adler and others.

over which the individuals have no control, may supply hindrances. Or the obstructions may exist largely in the fact that the characters do not know everything the audience does; their ignorance is the chief barrier of the play. If the obstacles are at any time entirely removed, the play will end at that point, because all doubt of the issues, all suspense, will be abstracted. If the impediments, or the accelerators, are not real, likely, plausible or cogent, the photoplay will want for dramatic effectiveness. That these general criteria may be illustrated, let us scrutinize closely the texture of the story outlined as follows:

The action of a certain photodrama hung upon the character of a vain and frivolous wife, who, though blissfully united to an indulgent husband, thinks of nothing quite so much as the dissipation of his income upon the passing parade of feminine fashions in dress. Of clothes she had never a sufficiency, it being shown that the husband scarcely had been able to mollify old creditors ere new members of the confraternity molested him with itemized recitals of the latest things in women's wear. The acceleration of affairs occurs when he, after having paid an old account for a sumptuous gown, discovers that his wife has again indebted him to the same firm to the tune of several hundreds of dollars. In a rage, he packs the offending articles of adornment into their original carton for a speedy return to the emporium whence they came, refusing to permit further inroads upon his pocketbook. However, somewhat more resigned, after a stormy scene with his wife, he is about to compromise by allowing her to retain one of the garments, when he awakes

to the disquieting fact that she has "gone home to mother." The mother is a "nice sort," albeit herself a bit vain, but with the grateful seasoning of experience in such matters. The husband hastily follows his outraged wife to her parental refuge, there to be repulsed with the statement that she prefers that roof to a life of raimentless misery under his own. He is in despair, but the mother, sympathizing with his explanations, promises to repair the rift within the marital lute. This she immediately sets in motion by sending him home and dismissing her servant upon a vacation. Daughter is now subjected to the exigencies of housework, to which she is a stranger. She, says her mother, must take her choice between a struggle with the Monday washing or a return to her forlorn partner. Accordingly, the daughter heroically — or shall I say obstinately? — plunges into the labor of cleansing the family linen. But, after many mishaps, with bruised hands and chastened temper, she slips away unobserved, so she thinks, to set matters aright with her deserted husband. This she accomplishes with the aid of that cajolery never wanting in such women, and the comedy ends.

Here we have a set of obstacles, the principal one of which is the husband's inability to gratify every whim of his vain wife. This acts as a too sudden check to her round of purchases. Pride sends her home to mother; pride and obstinacy keep her there; but work, the strongest barrier of all, sends her back to her husband.

The accelerators are the husband's grief at loss of his wife; the mother-in-law's sympathy and

resourcefulness; the spark of love still alive in the heart of the wife.

The obstacles of the story are independent of the wills of the people. The husband wishes to end the extravagance of his wife; but his plan would have failed had it not been for the mother. The wife wills to leave her husband, but obstacles force her to return. Thus, people in a photoplay cannot accomplish everything they will to do, although the aims of given ones may be attained to the full. But their desires give place to the events — the pressure — which the skilful scenarist brings to bear upon them. He so contrives and arranges his action that his personages act to HIS purpose even while appearing to act the most to their own. They must do, under given circumstances, only what it seems they are compelled to do by the course of events.

Again, the characters cannot know all the facts nor foresee the outcome of events of the story. The husband cannot foresee his wife's return; and it is his ignorance that lends him despair and furnishes both a hindrance and an accelerator. If the results had been apparent from the beginning, there could have been no drama, no action. No obstacles, no photoplay.

For this reason, the obstacles and impediments set up in the course of the photoplay are of the utmost importance to the author. The more closely they resemble the impediments of real life, the more surely will the spectators be enthralled by the action of the play. They must be of sufficient weight to justify the events and sustain the tension. In the comedy-drama we have just examined, they are largely trivial; but in a more

serious story, such as, "Orphans of the Storm," they take on a serious aspect. So also do the accelerators keep pace with the obstacles.

In farce the obstacles are trivial from the start; in drama they are weighty; in tragedy they are insurmountable and wreck the hopes and happiness of the characters.

It is natural to conclude that these accelerators and impediments of a story are part of its cause and effect. In many photoplays they are the whole warp and woof of cause and effect; in any play they are the larger part of causes and consequents.

Examples for the Scenarist

Let us begin with a few examples of obstacles and accelerators in literature.

"Fate," a novel by Couperus,* introduces the acceleration of the NEUROSIS. There is a neurotic parasite. There is true love. The parasite plots to attain his ease. The obstacles to turning him into the street lie in old friendship, pity for his weakness, generosity and high-mindedness.

In "Dope," a Sax Rohmer novel, we have the oriental cunning and the grip of habit pitted against the law and love.

Among short stories we find many excellent examples. Only a few need be mentioned. "The Black Pearl" of Sardou shows the obstacle of circumstantial evidence, the refusal to believe in any but established explanations of the law. In Dickens' "Trial for Murder," we have the supernatural accelerator and the natural obstacle

*English translation in Foreign Classical Romances (Collier).

of personal belief and opinion. In Mark Twain's immortal tale, "The Jumping Frog," we see the purely physical impediment; for the load of shot is too much for the talented Dan'l. In "The Piece of String," the low-minded suspicions and animalism of the peasants cannot be overcome, and we have a tragedy, an instance of a man crushed under circumstances.

Other Examples

In the detailed synopsis, ambition and love are both accelerators; but visions of a career, side by side with visions of hardships as Arthur's wife, are the obstacles which sway Anne's decision. In the great city Anne's intelligence is a hindrance to the designs of libertines, but Maribelle's impulsiveness is an accelerator. Going on, we see that Maribelle fails in her ambition due to personal impediments, but succeeds as a wife. Anne's bargain with George is an obstacle to her love for Arthur, which suddenly becomes an active accelerator. George's plan is largely upset by Arthur's arrival, a check. And Arthur's discovery is an obstacle which is removed by George's remorse, an accelerator. Thus we see the interplay, the mental, moral and even physical texture of the story, by which tension is maintained till the close. The struggle of accelerators against impediments begins in the critical conditions of the story and is intensified by the excitant, working up to a climax and then relieving the suspense, when the issues have reached the termination desired by the author and presaged in the moral problem, which runs through the incidents and colors them with its hue.

The continuity offers the beginner good study. He should find every accelerator and obstacle in its structure. Only by analysis of dramatic effect can we learn to employ it tellingly in our own work.

In a continuity the accelerators and obstacles are largely developed by the pantomime or "business" of the actors, their gestures and facial expression; but an occasional vision or fade, or even a leader or dialogue subtitle may be employed to develop certain of them that demand a more definite externalization. Inserts, such as letters, are also useful in this direction.

The obstacles and accelerators of a story should be closely developed in the synopsis, so that the reasons for every movement and counter-movement of the characters are understandable. The events must not occur because of vague, hidden or insufficient causes; and the beginning synoptist should seek to bring out each accelerator or obstacle as it arises.

Analytical and Playwriting Exercises

1. Select a synopsis you have written and test it for suitable obstacles and accelerators. Is there a motive for each important move or act of the various characters? Are the obstacles sufficient to preserve the action of the story to the end?

2. Rewrite the synopsis and incorporate suitable obstacles and accelerators.

3. Read "Eugenie Grandet" (Balzac) and explain the obstacles and accelerators. If you have seen the photoplay, does it conform to the original story in all incidents and details?

4. Choose a short-story of dramatic possibilities and write it as a synopsis, supplying all necessary obstacles and accelerators to make it convincing in dramatic form.

5. From the screen memorize a photoplay and write it out as nearly scene by scene as you can from memory. Then indicate how the various obstacles and accelerators were brought out by pictorial devices.

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER XIV

CHARACTERS, CHARACTERIZATION AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT*

Verisimilitude in a photodrama, lifelikeness, depends on nothing quite so much as on realistic, lifelike characters, who are moved by human emotions, actuated by human motives and plunged into situations from which they extricate themselves in a human manner. The plausibility of events rests largely with the people of the story; the total impression of the play, its CONVINCINGNESS, is conditioned on adequate characterization and probable character development as the events unroll themselves. If the personages of the story are mere MARIONETTES, moving at the direction of the author, if the motives are strained, vague or ineffectual, if the people become involved in and disentangle themselves from situations in a manner remote from that of real life; we, the spectators, cannot accept the story at its face value. We discount it or we dismiss it with the damning qualification "improbable."

Lack of probable characterization in photoplays some years ago brought forth a pithy protest, addressed to screen authors, which is worth quoting. Said the critic:

*The literature on photoplay writing should be consulted. See bibliography in appendix.

"Can't you be true to life?

"What's the good of making utter impossibilities of your characters? A college professor, for instance, can't act in the same manner as a ribbon clerk under given circumstances in a play. . . . .

"Learn to be logical, to be true to life!"*

What the critic meant to suggest is that persons in different environments are governed by different habits and methods and often swayed by different motives. If this is true of the people of life, it is as true of the flitting people of the screen. They derive their grip upon our sympathies from their analogy to the people of real life.

Let us now define character and characterization in the photoplay.

The word "temperament" is often confused with character. Temperament is a static quality related to the feelings. It is what a person is able to feel. Character, on the contrary, is dynamic; it is the habits of action developed in a person, what he has been able to accomplish. Thus, character is essentially adapted to the pictorial art; for it is vividly brought out in ACTION and developed by events.

Characterization is the art of externalizing character by events in which a person of the story shows what he IS by what he DOES and the manner in which it is DONE.

Character Externalization

The externalization of character is not merely effected by the main or plot events. In order that the plot incidents may be understandable,

*New York Dramatic News.

there must be an initial demonstration of the salient traits of a character prior to the important crises of the story; else his participation in the occurrences, his motives, may not be clear to the audience.

Generally, externalization of basic character is brought about by scenes of episode early in the action of a photoplay. These are tactical scenes and are merely preparatory to the later scenes of strategy or plot. In the photoplay, "The Song of Life," we are shown the sordid surroundings of the principals; the cheery ambition of the young novelist, the doting old woman who slaves over the housework, the young wife tired of her drab and vulgar environment and longing for the pretty things of luxury and ease. The scenes by which we thus were introduced to the characteristics of the personages in the story were mainly episodic, for they did little to further the plot. Later on, however, the main events are passably explanatory because of the traits revealed in these earlier incidents.

Again, in "The Midnight Bell," we are early shown the trustfulness of the daughter, the kindliness of the old merchant and the courage of the young clerk. Without these tactical incidents we should not have been able to accept the subsequent events. In truth, the character of the girl was not sufficiently developed to justify the part she later played; but the general method of characterization was correct in its tactics.

Methods of Characterization

Character is indicated in the pantomime by which the scenes are developed; the motions of

a personage, his facial expressions, his mannerisms. If he is a heartless, slave-driving captain of industry, for example, we see it in his very manner. Again, it appears in the conduct of the person, what he does, his motives, and how he reacts to the other characters. All this is merely tactical. But occasions arise where some more **DEFINITE** method must be employed to convey motives more complex or unusual than can be externalized pictorially, or traits too sublet for pantomime.

In this case resort is made to the subtitle, leader, or the insert, and, for a moment, the play descends from its natural pictorial setting and espouses the **LITERARY** method so that the facts may be explained to the audience. Whenever it is necessary to clarify a part of the story by subtitles they should be employed; for an understandable story is preferable to a mere adherence to pictorial form. This, of course, applies to continuities, for the synopsis writer has every opportunity to explain his characters.

The artistic craftsman, therefore, is ever under the necessity of penetrating to the characteristics of habit and motive of his personages. These he reveals or develops successively through the aforementioned means, so that the audience is never at a loss to comprehend the interplay of character and event. Thus, it might be made to follow that, in a play as differentiated from life, motive should **PRECEDE** the results to which it gives rise. For one of the most admittedly crude of unadroit practices is to retrace and explain the motives for any given exploit of the play in retrospect. Nothing more fatal to the

specifically dramatic impressions could be imagined than this backhanded method. As to preferred means of character development in the photoplay few recommendations, in the form of rule, may for obvious reasons be given. The usual procedure is to permit an exposition of MANNERISMS, the purely physical clues to character, to suggest the especial type of personage in which they are in life most often observed. But it is motives, as set forth by the dramatist, which, in connection with gestures, attitudes, facial expressions, and the like, give us the clearest ideas of the personages in a photoplay. This suggests that the photoplaywright should select mannerisms, motives, and so on, with an eye to their universality. In other words, subtle shadings, involved motives, and their like, while they may be all very well in the SPOKEN play or the novel, are not well fitted to the pictorial form.

For illustrations of the various methods of character externalization, turn to the continuity of Chapter 23. In such a scene as No. 3 the pantomimic method is exemplified. In scene 26 character is shown in action. The numerous subtitles may be studied for effective character explanation.

Character and Plot

To the scenarist the importance of characters in the weaving of a plot is a consideration paramount. The importance of the characters is in this respect so great that certain systems of photoplay instruction are based on a formula called the dramatic TRIAD, a triumvirate of personages, usually hero, heroine and a "heavy"

or villain. Given these three characters in certain circumstances, they are presumed to be able to develop the story.

While no such formula is advocated in this book, the scenarist may be sure that he can find original events, a fresh viewpoint, a new solution of old problems, only in his people. If they are unusual or original, his events will have originality, for unusual people react to incidents in an original manner, while at the same time remaining true to life. If the people are commonplace, the story will be ordinary, or it will be improbable and artificial.

If the story somehow lacks force or complication, let the characters work it out. Go back to character and find in it the new way out, the complications desired. But be very sure that plausibility is not sacrificed for so-called originality, or for that "new twist" we have heard about so often and seen so seldom.

A bad example of the "new twist," by which character is violated and the photoplay rendered artificial in the extreme, may be found in "Travelin' On." In this story an itinerant parson arrives at an unusually depraved settlement whose scabrous inhabitants he desires to reform. Lacking the funds wherewith to build a church, he compromises with the Devil by turning bandit and holding up the stage. In this manner he collects the money to build the church!

But this is so entirely opposed to religious teachings, even where the servant of God is a circuit rider, that it is unacceptable. Original it no doubt IS; true to life unmistakably it IS NOT. The characters of the story were not

allowed to work out this situation; they were coerced by the designing hand of the author. Had they unraveled their own destinies, a truer and equally original solution could have been found.

The aspirant can form no better habit than that of seeking in character the complication and direction of his main events, guided, of course, by the moral problem and by the formula of his play. Instead of padding a weak plot with useless details, let the characters find something new and appealing to do.

Hints on Characters

Characters naturally divide themselves into major and minor groups, according to their functions in a story. The unity of character is preserved by keeping all subordinate figures in their proper place and in not allowing any subordinate to run away with the play by assumption of an important part.

The number of characters is governed by the events; but the fewer the better. The major figures are not limited to a triad, but they should not exceed five or six, if possible. The fewer the minors and extras, the better from the bias of expense.

The naming of characters is important in that names should where possible fit personalities and suggest types. A strong man should not be named Percy Primrose, nor should a society girl be dubbed Mary Ellen O'Grady. Characters need not always be named in full, unless the author conceives of them as real persons, but may have only an appropriate first name in many

cases. A full name is not objectionable, as it may be reduced in the scenario, if desired. The choice of suggestive names is the author's real problem.

Introduction of Characters

Characters should be introduced into the action as early as possible; but the part a personage plays in the story must govern his entry into the events. In such a photodramatic spectacle as "Orphans of the Storm," there are many characters who do not enter the action until late in the story, and they are mostly minors or extras, although in some stories an important figure may not enter until the action is well under way.

As to the manner of introduction, in those plays which have a set of simple critical conditions and in which the initial relationships of the people are easily grasped by the audience, it is customary to flash on the screen just before the opening scene, a cast of characters, giving the names and relations of the people. The spectator is thereafter left to identify the personages for himself. For example, note the following cast:

Cora Pendleton, The Neglected Wife.
John, Her Husband.
Mrs. Wendall, His Sister.
Alec, The Newly Acquired Chauffeur.

On the other hand, where the critical conditions are not so simple, or where the relationships between the people are more complex or unusual, a deft method of introduction is to announce the characters singly in the opening scenes, preceding each new character with a subtitle, giving

some salient fact about him and his relation to others in the piece. Such was the method used in the continuity of Chapter 23, in the adaptation of "The Christian," and in numerous other photo-dramas of note.

Still a third method, where one outstanding character is to be developed, is to show this personage in the opening events as the cynosure or center of gossip, newspaper talk, or some other comment. Thus, we find out many things about him indirectly. In a certain photoplay, we were shown a man seated in a clubroom, and behind his back club members were discussing him. As he lifted his eyes from a magazine he was reading, the periodical was flashed and we saw that it contained an article about himself and a description which imparted to us many important facts about his character. Such a method is suited only to photoplays in which ONE character is overwhelmingly important.

The foregoing remarks apply to the photoplay as produced or in scenario form. As to the synopsis, characters are introduced in it as in a short-story, except that no lengthy descriptions are necessary. Terse and pithy character descriptions are sufficient at the introduction, and additional facts may be added later in the story as the events develop. For an example, study the introductions in the detailed synopsis.

The cast of characters which precedes the synopsis, should give the names of the characters and their relationships, and may give some idea of the dominating personalities or motives. Observe the following cast:

Silas Martin, who loves money but fears banks.
Pete, his "no-good" son.
Mary, his daughter, a willing drudge.

Parting advice to the scenarist might be:

Live with your characters until they become real and they will, in return, surprise you with the fertility of suggestions they offer as to original plot events, lifelike tactics and dramatic behavior.

EXERCISES

1. Study the number of important and minor characters in several photoplays.
2. Study the method of introduction of the characters in several photoplays, writing out the method employed in each and assigning a reason for it.
3. Test a synopsis you have written for plausible character development and rewrite any unconvincing incidents.
4. Select any photoplay from the screen which exhibits improbable characters and alter the story so as to conform the characters to the events, or vice versa.
5. Do you think that for the sake of a "new twist" you should sacrifice logical character development?

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER XV

SEQUENCE, CONTINUITY OR RELATIONSHIP OF THE PARTS

Of every dramatic composition the one structural characteristic most singular, most outstanding, is the arrangement of its parts, the adjustment of its segments and strands of event, incident, detail and fact in an ORDER or SUCCESSION which shall be called DRAMATIC SEQUENCE.* In prior chapters we have seen the importance of sequence as a means toward suspense, crisis, preparation and surprise. All that remains to be given is a co-ordinated view of the principle as it affects each and every part of a photoplay, continuity or synopsis; how it builds one dramatic impression upon another in such wise as to arouse the spectators to the keenest apprehension, excitement, participation. Certain it is that, short of this effect, the sequence of a photodrama is faulty, impotent, wanting.

Sequence finds an apt parallel in one of those printed picture puzzles composed of many oddly-shaped pieces. If all the pieces are put together in the proper order the result is a complete and intelligible picture; but get a single piece in the wrong place and the entire structure is thrown out of relation. Or, again, we might find an

*This is a subject ably treated by W. T. Price, and by a number of authors. See bibliography.

analogy between the sequence of parts in a photoplay and the mechanism of a watch. Each horological cog, spring or balance performs a function in relation to the others and must occupy a certain position. The parts are not interchangeable; they function properly only when in the ORDER intended by the designer.

Side by side with sequence, the term CONTINUITY seems to need defining. The word has been given a technical meaning synonymous with scenario; but the continuity of a dramatic narrative, of its events or situations, whether in a synopsis or scenario, is that CONTINUOUS flow or progression of the parts toward a climax or result. In brief, sequence is a static relation of the parts; continuity is a dynamic connection.

Thus, in a photoplay the relationship between a scene of preparation and the surprise it foretokens is sequence; but the connective scenes by which progress is made from one strand of the action to another are continuity scenes. In this chapter study will be confined to sequence.

At this point, a classification of sequence, as it applies to various groups of the material in a photoplay, seems necessary.

Sequence may be:

(a) The juxtaposition of one event with another, or the influence of one incident upon another which occurs later.

(b) The relationship of character episodes or of developments of character.

(c) The succession of minor facts and details with reference to their effect on subsequent happenings or details.

(d) The arrangement of the SCENES in that order best calculated to bring about the impressions intended by the scenarist.

A General Illustration

Read carefully the following outline of "Orphans of the Storm."

†On the brink of the French Revolution, Henriette and her blind adopted sister, Louise, are living near Paris; and Louise is dependent on Henriette for the aid a blind person requires. The girls are orphans.

†The two orphans are on their way to consult an eye specialist, when they are intercepted by a libertine who has been smitten with Henriette's great beauty.

He kidnaps Henriette and conveys her to a licentious ball, leaving the poor, blind Louise helpless in the streets of Paris.

When Henriette's defense of her honor is seen to be genuine, de Vaudrey, a young nobleman, rescues her and secures her safe lodgings.

†De Vaudrey lives with an aunt who years before had stolen from her a little daughter (born of a commoner), who was left on the steps of Notre Dame with no other identification than a locket containing a few written words. De Vaudrey falls in love with Henriette and presses her to marry him.

†Louise has, meanwhile, been taken in by Pierre, a knife grinder, whose hag of a mother compels her to sing in the streets for charity; but Pierre secretly loves her and protects her from his brother, Jacques, a dissolute scamp.

†The Revolution is beginning, and Danton is

forced to hide. When he applies to Henriette for aid, she dresses his wound and secretes him at risk to herself.

De Vaudrey, who refuses to marry anyone but Henriette, is exiled, but his aunt visits Henriette and hears of the missing Louise. From the locket she recognizes Louise as her lost daughter.

Louise is heard singing in the streets and Henriette is about to go to her, when gendarmes arrive and drag Henriette to the bastile on a charge trumped up by the aristocrats.

When Paris falls into the hands of the people, Henriette is freed.

De Vaudrey, who has meanwhile escaped, returns to Paris as a bourgeois and seeks Henriette. In her company, he is recognized and he and Henriette are arrested and taken before the Tribunal.

At the trial Henriette finds Louise, but she and De Vaudrey are carted to the guillotine.

Danton, who remembers Henriette and de Vaudrey as friends, pleads for their release so eloquently to the mob that the people rise and demand their pardon.

Danton, who has secured the pardon, arrives at the guillotine in the nick of time, for Pierre has just delayed the execution a few moments by stabbing the executioner, but is also released. Louise's eyesight is later restored and all ends happily for the principals.

The sequence of the facts and events as presented in the above resume is, for all its apparent looseness, carefully arranged.

For instance, we are aroused to poignant suspense by the plight of Louise, left alone in the

streets, only because it has been previously shown that she is helpless without her foster-sister's aid, and because of the license and violence of the times.

Again, we know that de Vaudrey's aunt has lost a daughter and that Louise is an adopted child; and these pave the way for the discovery that Louise is the long-sought daughter.

Louise, loved by Pierre, is forced to sing in the streets, and is heard by Henriette. This situation is affecting because of our knowledge of the search for the blind girl and her life in a hovel.

Danton is befriended by Henriette and in turn befriends her and her lover. De Vaudrey is taken in company with his sweetheart, for he has sworn to marry none other.

The scene of separation between Louise and Henriette, as the latter is dragged away to the guillotine, is acutely appealing because of all that has gone before. Louise we now know is of gentle birth, but cannot aid the sister who once was her guide and stay.

The execution is delayed a few moments by Pierre who, for love of Louise, stabs the executioner. This gives Danton time to arrive with the pardon.

For an example of minor sequence, we may look to the locket which subsequently leads to the discovery of Louise's parentage.

In view of an illustration of this kind, it is readily seen that most of the specifically dramatic effect turns upon the SEQUENCE of the material of a story. Unless each incident occurs at its proper time, unless each fact is disclosed at its

proper place, the effect is flat, stale, tepid, feeble or undramatic.

Certain it is that we might rearrange the material of this resume so as to deprive the poignant events of their intensity. This we should accomplish by introducing some facts too soon and others too late; by reordering certain events to occur earlier or later in the series.

Read the designated paragraphs carefully. Suppose we delete the fact that Louise depends on Henriette; does not the subsequent incident where Louise wanders hither and yon in the streets lose some of its effect? If, further, we suppress all reference to the unsettled times, does it not again lose in appeal?

Or, if Pierre had not been shown to be in love with Louise, could we experience that same sharp emotion when he delays the execution by stabbing the executioner?

The student can prove the efficacy of sequence by experimenting carefully to ascertain if the events may be readjusted while preserving the effects in their original intensity.

Perhaps, if we will consider what dramatic sequence is not, it may render more vivid what dramatic sequence IS. Many stories have been written in a sequence which we shall call CHRONOLOGICAL; in fact, this is the true narrative order. Chronological sequence begins with the earliest events, such as the youth of the hero, and proceeds to record occurrences according to their position in TIME. "David Copperfield" is an example of narrative chronology. Dramatic sequence ignores time, if its effects so demand. Occasionally, the chronological sequence coincides with the dra-

matic, as in the detailed synopsis. But, were this synopsis TRULY chronological, it would begin with the childhood friendship of Anne and George and employ no retrospect — even the briefest.

But many stories there are which do not follow a chronological sequence. Adventure tales, such as the Sherlock Holmes cases (in the original), employ retrospect, explaining important facts after the conclusion of the episode has been divulged; still other narratives use the story within the story to retain an important secret. It does not follow that these are dramatic of sequence merely because they observe no time arrangement of the incidents. They are undramatic for the reason that they do not proceed by crises nor maintain suspense, but divert the spectator's mind from the channel of dramatic momentum.

Equally evident is the fact that dramatic sequence is not always logical. This applies with most cogency to the sequence of minor facts and details; for these, controlled as they are by dramatic law, are not always inserted at a purely logical point in the incidents. Thus, many of the facts in "Orphans of the Storm," are not logically placed, but they are DRAMATICALLY placed.

We may almost say that no work of fiction in story form has a dramatic sequence until changes have been made in its material. Frequent observation of ADAPTATIONS must lead us to conclude that the dramatic succession of events is seldom within the ken of your novelist or story writer, and, even if understood, it is too often discarded.

Too often, indeed, we find the works of standard authors far removed from a dramatic arrangement

of material. Take Balzac's story of the Duchesse de Langeais announced under the title of "The Eternal Flame." The student should read the original for himself. For those who may not have seen the photoplay, it may be said that the critical conditions begin with a drunken wager between the Duc de Langeais and De Marsay in which the latter bets he can shake the fidelity and chastity of the beautiful and virginal Duchesse. A dramatic excitant is also introduced when the Duchesse essays to become a coquette. It is because of this resolve that she subjugates General de Montriveau. In the original the Duc dies after the Duchesse has entered the abbey (true to life); but in the adaptation, as a detail of convenience, he obligingly dies before, thus destroying the triad and cheating the abbey. For the doughty General pursues Madame to the abbey gates and drags her back just as they swing open!

There seems to be occasion at this point to call attention to a pernicious habit, sometimes practiced by authors as well as directors, namely, the padding of a weak sequence with numerous pictorial or episodic scenes. In "Smilin' Through," an otherwise commendable production, a light story was surfeited with scenes — many of them patently superfluous. This is as bad as the attempt to clarify an involved or clumsy sequence by the too liberal use of subtitles or dialogue leaders.

Sequence of Synopsis and Scenario

A synopsis employs but the first three types of dramatic sequence, i. e., event, character and

detail. But the continuity, in addition to these, must arrange its scenes in the dramatic succession with reference to the story. The scenes of which a photoplay is compounded have each of them certain functions to perform, certain segments of fact and detail to establish; and upon the juxtaposition of these much of a play's dramatic impression is based.

Logic or chronology might demand a certain sequence, but the story demands dramatic treatment. The cut-back must connect the strands of narrative at the dramatic moment, since the cutting back and forth, to and fro, from part to part of any two lines of the action occurring simultaneously, is often far from logical and yet always calculated to heighten the dramatic tension and enhance certain of the effects. Without, therefore, taking up further space on what may seem a tedious matter, let me point out that effects in a play are conditioned upon a PRIORITY and subsequence of scenes; that is, the sequence in which we are made acquainted with the facts of the photodrama governs the IMPRESSIONS we receive from the narrative. Effects coming first in the series supply the basis for tense dramatic impressions brought about subsequently. Without the antecedents, we (as onlookers) are not in a position to recognize or evaluate the significance of later parts in the degree required.

Every scene in a scenario, just as every detail in a synopsis, has a proper place which it should occupy. Half the beginner's battle lies in mastering dramatic sequence.

Retrospect or "visioning" is often fatal to sequence because it withholds facts that ought

to have been introduced early in the play. On the other side, a scene coming too soon may anticipate a later event and destroy its effect. If we knew earlier that Danton would secure a pardon for Henriette and her lover, much of the suspense would vanish. If we knew that Pierre would stab the executioner the surprise and suspense of the incident would be impaired.

In addition to the general division of scenes into strategical and tactical, they may be classified according to purpose, such as scenes of event, of character, of preparation, and the like. Their position in the series is governed by their purposes in the strategy or tactics.

Rules for the Craftsman

It has to be acknowledged that little of exact rule may be given the craftsman wherewith to hasten his mastery of sequence. But, after all, too many rules should not be expected, when we consider that every story is a structural problem unto itself. As a fact, too, it is the empiricist who is forever searching for rule of thumb by which he may invariably handle details or put together scenes with the least display of originality or the smallest expenditure of mental effort. From such a miasma as that heaven deliver all true dramatists!

Sequence must, first of all, be governed by cause and effect. The events must be so arranged that, when a thing happens, we understand its cause. If the incident is one wholly of chance or coincidence, it should be so placed in the action as to stand as the basis of certain succeeding occurrences.

Thus, in "The Prisoner of Zenda," the striking

likeness between Rudolph Rassendyll and the King is early established in order that it may explain the subsequent current of events.

The passage of a photoplay action from crisis to crisis, arousing and maintaining suspense, is traceable to the sequence of its material. This, in fact, is the constant aim of the scenarist, and it is not confined to melodrama. Comedy, comedy-drama and heavy drama, all these require the peculiar sequence of dramatic effect.

As we also have seen, the effect of surprise properly foretokened necessitates a sequence of given incidents and details. This is subordinate to the larger sequence of suspense, but must be taken care of by the author.

Character development must be carried on in proper juxtaposition to the other details. Obstacles and accelerators must be inserted where they shall have the effect desired. The action should proceed from the excitant to the climax in an increasingly tense pattern, relaxing the tension at the close and not previously.

The sequence of a photoplay will, therefore, be arranged to accomplish the aforementioned desiderata of dramatic structure; and this, be it added, involves a process of thought.

The photoplaywright calculates the probable effect of each fact, detail or event as related to the others and places it at that juncture of the action which is most advantageous to the general and special impressions of the story. He asks himself, Can I find a better place for this detail of preparation; shall I make this event clear by the cause that precedes it; is the suspense at this point supported by obstacles; does that character

act from reasonable motives well grounded in the past occurrences; shall this surprise be intelligible to the audience?

Only thus is a photoplay properly arranged and developed. There is no easy road to dramatic effect except by stereotyped plots and people.

Workshop Notes

In the synopsis there is a careful sequence, not chronological but dramatic; the cut-back is employed to connect the narrative strands; the characters and motives are unreeled with an eye to effect. The student can do no better than analyze this story for its sequence.

The continuity offers another example which should be examined for sequence of the SCENES as well as of events and details.

Analytical and Playwriting Exercises

1. Memorize from the screen a photoplay and write it out as nearly as possible scene by scene. Point out how the sequence of its events and scenes conduces to dramatic effects, such as suspense, surprise, etc.

2. Choose a short-story of plot but having a chronological sequence and alter the sequence so as to produce dramatic effects with the material. Add any necessary details that are absent from the material.

3. Analyze thoroughly the sequence of the synopses and continuity given in this book. Observe how all the material is so arranged as to produce dramatic effects (surprise, crisis, suspense, etc.) both momentary and ultimate.

4. Select a synopsis you have written and analyze it for effective sequence of all the material. If possible, rearrange the material so as to improve the suspense, surprise, etc., of the story. If several strands of narrative are handled concurrently, be sure that you cut back and forth from part to part in a dramatic manner.

5. If you have not written a suitable synopsis, turn one of the synopses in the book into scenes, as best you can, giving them the effective sequence of a photoplay.

6. Do you realize the value of these exercises in breaking bad habits of thought and method in your photoplay writing? Have you worked them out conscientiously? Can you become a successful scenarist without practice?

Prefatory Note to Book Two

It is assumed that the student has done at least two-thirds of the exercise work (analytical and creative) assigned to the past chapters. If not, he should by all means turn back and cover it before beginning Chapter 16. A person becomes an author by WRITING; that is, the technique of the art is gained in ACTUAL PRACTICE.

Advanced playwriting assignments, and exercises in writing for the CAMERA, begin in the following chapters, and, unless the elementary and prefatory work has been done, the student, no matter how well meaning, will not accomplish what he should from the assignments.

THE AUTHOR

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

BOOK TWO

CHAPTER XVI

THE SCENARIO AND SCENE WRITING

A scenario or continuity is composed of a number of units, each of which is called a SCENE. Just as there is, in the scenario as a whole, a certain effective sequence of the material and of the units or scenes, so, also, there is in each scene an arrangement of the material most conducive to its intended effect.

It seems advisable, therefore, for the student first to master the principles of scene writing before attempting to write a continuity suitable for production. If he understands the composition of the units, he will the easier master the art of a complete scenario; for the continuity is a complicated matter to a beginner mainly because he does not understand the art of writing the units.

Scene writing demands a two-fold effectiveness; (1) an arrangement of the material in a scene specifically for dramatic effect, (2) an arrangement or division of the material most suited to the CAMERA.

The general division of scenes into those of strategy and tactics must now be supplemented by a classification according to functions.

From the dramatic point of view scenes, either of plot or action, may be grouped as scenes of event, character, preparation, surprise, objectivity and emotion. On the photographic side, scenes are principal and connective — "continuity shots."

Of scenes of these divisions we have had examples of all save the following: The close-up, in which some object is shown, is a scene of objectivity; the close-up which renders vivid the emotion on the face of a character is an emotional scene. The "continuity shot" is a connective scene, such as that showing a character as he journeys to or arrives at some place for which he has set out.

Dramatic Scene Writing

That word which, in a sentence, we wish to accentuate or give prominence to, we place at its END, knowing that to be the position of maximum emphasis. The general principle of scene writing is the same. That fact, detail, event or impression which is most important at the moment, which we wish to stress or make outstanding, we place at the scene's end. Thus, we rise to a little climax in each and every scene; but these climaxes are not such in the ordinary meaning, for a scene-climax may not be a dramatic climax, but merely some fact or detail to be emphasized. However, we may regard the process as CLIMACTERIC; for it necessitates the marshaling of the material in a scene from a beginning of less tension or interest to an ending of greater tension or interest. In every scene, therefore, we must give to the material that sequence which builds up to the climax,

which leads from the premises to the desired result or effect.

The various general reasons which influence the climacteric order of scene material, which govern the choice of what is to be placed in the position of maximum emphasis at the end, are set down as follows:

We proceed —

(a) From general facts and details to **PARTICULAR** facts and details to be accentuated

(b) From weaker or less dramatic emotions, gesticulations, or decisions to **STRONGER** or **MORE** dramatic ones

(c) From less violent, dramatic, or portentious acts or deeds to those **MORE** violent, dramatic, or portentious.

(d) In general from the quiescent to the critical; from the obvious to the surprising; from the ordinary to the poignant or affecting; from the relaxed to the tense; from the premises to the conclusion or result.

As an example of the dramatic method in scene building read carefully the two scenes herewith reproduced from the continuity of Chapter 23:

Scene 19. PRIVATE OFFICE (as in 16) (Semi-Close-Up). All three enter — Ladies are seated — Doctor seated — Listens closely to Mrs. Cabot's explanations — Helen piquant — half amused — smiles and mouthes by turns. Doctor feels her pulse — makes her show whites of eyes — takes out thermometer — gives it to her — she places it in mouth gingerly as if it were the first time she had ever seen one.

Doctor chats with Mrs. Cabot. Helen takes thermometer from mouth covertly — sees doctor is not watching — glances archly at him — shakes thermometer violently — smiles naughtily — shakes it again — puts it back — Doctor takes it from her — looks at it — surprised — Cut.

Scene 20. CLOSE-UP.

Doctor looking at thermometer with amazement. Feels her pulse again — sees her smile — begins to understand — registers he is "wise"—

In the first of the foregoing scenes, we observe that the material is adjusted to lead from the general to the particular; from a general interest on the doctor's part to a particular feminine wile on the part of Helen. Again, the scene leads up to a single momentarily dominating emotion — the doctor's surprise when he reads the thermometer.

The desired impression is completed in the next scene, in which the doctor is led from a general idea of fever to a particular idea presaging another kind of warmth. Here the most important fact to be conveyed to the audience is the young physician's understanding of Helen's little suggestion. Therefore it is placed at the scene's end.

But while these are good examples they by no means cover the entire theory of the subject. Careful reading of the continuity (Chapter 23) will throw light upon scene endings equally as momentous.

As an additional illustration, a scene might end with the exit from a room of a character who hears

a shot. The most consequential fact in this instance would be the exit of the character to investigate the sound, and it would, of course, end the scene. In a photoplay outlined in Chapter 10, the important fact of one scene was that two characters leave a certain room in which a necklace lies on a table in full view of the audience. The purpose here was to show that they left the necklace in the room at their exeunt.

From this we may deduce the cardinal principle that it is the PURPOSE of a scene, its most essential impression (whether event, emotion, or other detail), which governs what is to be accentuated at its end. The momentary effect it is to contribute to the total effect of the play will decide the most momentous detail. Once that is decided, the material should be arranged to lead up to it in a climacteric order or sequence. Scenes such as 5, 10, 16, or 29 of the continuity justify their final effects only in the light of this great principle of scene writing.

All real scenarists, all finished photoplaywrights, should understand the fundamentals of continuity writing, and, of course, the technique of scene writing. The synoptist is writing for the camera in the final analysis, and he should of necessity know something about the limitations and peculiarities of the mechanism which, ultimately, will transform his story into film. To that end the study of scene writing for the camera, as treated in the sections to come, or in future chapters, is especially urged on those who want to write for moving pictures.

Scene Writing for the Camera

As a mechanism the camera is wonderfully adaptable to conditions, but, like all mechanical instruments, it has limitations. A moving picture camera is a rather heavy machine which must be solidly mounted (on a tripod) or securely anchored to some moving object (such as an auto) in order to function. It will take everything in its range, but its range is not so wide as first thought might suggest to the novice. A camera cannot, of course, be mounted anywhere or everywhere, although it can be carried to many inaccessible localities, such as to the top of some mountain or the wastes of a desert.

The art of writing scenes for the camera is in knowing the ordinary range and limits of pictorial effect and how to conform the material of the story to photographic production by scene units.

What is a Scene?

In the short-story or novel a scene may be defined as any action taking place in a described setting between described characters; or the thoughts, conduct or speech of the characters in any described location. In the stage drama, a scene is regarded as beginning with the entrance of an important character upon the stage and ending with the exit of a major personage. But the photographic scene is conformable to neither of these; for it may require a number of separate photoplay scenes to present all the action occurring momentarily at any especial place or in any given setting. Thus, in "Orphans of the Storm," when Henriette hears the voice of Louise in the street

below and goes to the balcony to call her, it required a number of distinct scenes, with cutting back and forth, to show the action going on upon the balcony and the response of Louise in the street below. Again, mere entrances and exits have, in the photoplay, little effect upon the scenes, unless all the characters exeunt at the end of a particular event or situation, which, of course, ends that scene; and their return to that setting would, of course, begin another scene for reasons now to be given.

The photographic scene is governed by the starting and stopping of the camera. A scene is all the action which may be "shot" at any one time or in any location or set without stopping the camera. If the camera must, for any reason, be stopped and moved closer, farther away, to right or left, or to another set or location, a new scene is begun when the camera is again put in action.

This is explainable when we remember that the camera is not ordinarily mounted on a movable object or mechanism, and, in order to move it closer, say, to take a close-up, the cameraman must stop grinding or "shooting" while it is being adjusted in the new position. A close-up is, for this reason, a separate scene; for, when it has been taken, the camera must be moved away, thus beginning still another scene.

Explanation of Scene Types

The close-up is, as we have seen, taken with the camera but a few feet from the actors.* Its purpose is to show some object more vividly than

*See the remarks on the double-lens in Chapter 21. A Semi-Close-Up is a scene closer than normal but not quite a close-up.

would be possible without the enlargement of details dependent upon the close range of the camera. Or the emotion depicted on the face of a character may be the detail which it is desired to emphasize for the audience.

On the other hand, the long-distance "shot" is a scene taken from a considerable distance and, perhaps, with the camera mounted **ABOVE** the set or location in order to secure a bird's eye or airplane view, or increase the scope of the lens. Thus, the ballroom scene in "Orphans of the Storm" showed the full length of the large room with the crowd making an aisle for the entrance of Louis XVI. But in order to get all this detail into the eye or lens of the machine, it was mounted above the floor (as if on the mezzanine) and at a distance which rendered the dancers small and indistinct.

The ordinary scene may be called a normal distance scene and its details are clear, if toward the foreground. There are numerous other distances the farthest of which lose in clarity of detail.

If the camera, in any scene, is made to follow an actor as he walks toward some distant object, the entire action is a single scene called a **PANORAM.** Scenic-plays often employ the panoram, which does not require that the camera be stopped. A similar effect was noticed in "Orphans of the Storm," when, in the library of the Prefect of Police, the camera first showed the room at normal distance and then was moved back (without stopping) to enlarge the scope while somewhat dimming the vividness of the action.

A perspective scene is one in perspective, as where the camera is focused down a street, and certain actors may be seen approaching the camera.

Advantages and disadvantages of the various types of scene may be briefly listed as follows:

(1). The closer the camera the smaller the area it covers, but the more distinct the action and details.

(2) The farther the camera the greater its scope, but the smaller and less distinct the actors or details.

(3) The larger the crowd of persons to be included the less outstanding the actions or figure of any individual among them. Even in normal-distance "shots" only the pantomine of those actors in the FOREGROUND is unmistakably clear. As a rule, not more than four or five actors can work effectively in such a scene and usually fewer. If we have a crowd to manipulate, we must resort to close-ups of various GROUPS, if we want their pantomime to be effective.

By way of illustration, read the scene given below:

Scene 66. BALLROOM — SHOWING FULL LENGTH OF ROOM. Crowd dancing on floor — walls gaily decorated — John and Mabel dancing amid crowd. Mabel registers she is weary. They leave floor and go to seats at one side. Mabel sinks into seat — headache — John is very solicitous — Mabel registers she is tired and would like to go. John is surprised but assents readily — they prepare to leave — Cut.

Here it is evident that the figures upon the floor of a ballroom shown full length will be too small and indistinct to register any recognizable emotions. So, we must move the camera closer, following the distant "shot" with a normal-distance scene and even a close-up to show the girl's headache. Now, note carefully how it is done:

Scene 66. BALLROOM — SHOWING FULL LENGTH OF ROOM. Crowd dancing on floor — walls gaily decorated — John and Mabel dancing in throng nearest camera —

Scene 67. CLOSER VIEW (Normal distance) John and Mabel dance toward camera— as they draw near, Mabel registers she is weary — John is solicitous — escorts her from floor toward seats —

Scene 68. SIDE OF BALLROOM — SEATS John and Mabel seat themselves — Mabel very tired — John bends over her tenderly

Scene 69. CLOSE-UP*
Mabel has bad headache — very weary

Scene 70. BACK TO 68
Mabel signifies she wants to leave — John assents — she rises and leans on his arm as they pass out of scene —

Or, somewhat differently, the crowd of actors in the ensuing scene renders obscure any individual emotions:

*"Bust" is a term sometimes applied to a close-up of a head and shoulders, although "close-up" is preferred usage.

Scene. ON THE PLAINS

Indians dash into picture firing at pursuers. Big Chief at rear fighting hard. Settlers dash in firing at Indians. Melee — Big Chief wounded — falls from horse — registers he is prepared to die fighting — grabs gun from ground and prepares to fire it from reclining position —

Observe how this problem is solved:

Scene. DISTANT VIEW

Indians and settlers in combat — Indians being worsted — they retreat pursued by settlers —

Scene. ON THE PLAINS

Indians pursued by settlers — they are making final stand — Big Chief encouraging men —

Scene. CLOSER VIEW

Settlers dash into scene — Melee — Big Chief wounded — falls —

Scene. CLOSE-UP

Big Chief registers he is prepared to die fighting — reaches for gun fallen nearby — prepares to fire from reclining posture —

The beginner should learn to see upon the screen the problems of the camera and how they have been solved. Learn to visualize what is seen upon the screen in terms of the scenario manuscript.

In the following scene we see an object to be identified and an insert or communication:

Scene 23. INTERIOR OF BARREN HOVEL
Discovered woman lying on scantily covered straw bed at one side. Enter JEAN GIRARD, carrying both babies in his arms. He crosses to wife's bed — she raises herself feebly upon her pallet as he puts their own child in her arms. He shows her the other baby — she is surprised — questions him — he explains — points out locket hung about the child's neck. They open it. It contains a slip of paper bearing the words: "Her name is Louise — save her." They are puzzled, sympathetic. He discovers another object in baby's clothing — a purse. Shows it to her excitedly. They open it with trembling hands — several coins fall out — they are delighted — they embrace.

Notice how the various components of the scene are separated and brought out below:

Scene 23. INTERIOR OF BARREN HOVEL
Discovered woman lying on scantily covered straw bed at one side. Enter JEAN GIRARD, carrying both babies in his arms. He crosses to wife's bed — she raises herself feebly upon her pallet as he puts their own child in her arms. He shows her the other baby — she is surprised — questions him — he explains — points out locket hanging about the child's neck. They examine it closely.

Scene 24. CLOSE-UP

Plain view of locket as they finger it — They open it and draw out a paper which he unfolds — something is written on it —

INSERT —

(On Screen). Sheet of plain paper with — "Her name is Louise — save her."

BACK TO 23

She restores locket to child — he finds another object among its clothing which he shows her excitedly — she clutches at it with nervous hand.

Scene 25. CLOSE-UP

He is holding a purse — they open it and a number of coins fall out — both of them give exclamations of delight — they embrace — Cut.

The words "Cut" and "Fade" used at the end of a scene mean respectively to cut short the final effect or to dissolve out slowly, as in a deathbed scene, for example.

Scene Writing Exercises

1. In the following scene there is something wrong with the arrangement of the material. Find it and rewrite correctly.

COTTAGE IN BACKGROUND OF FENCED YARD

Small child playing in yard. Enter EVELYN carrying flowers she has gathered — Stops to speak to child, who comes to fence in responsive friendliness — Mother appears at cottage door sternly calling

child to her — Evelyn gives child some of the flowers — child delighted — Mother snatches child up — dashes flowers to ground — ignores Evelyn — Evelyn is deeply hurt — Mother carries child hastily into cottage.

2. In the following scene there is an undramatic sequence — correct it.

INTERIOR OF STUDIO — CLOSE TO DAIS

Artist is arranging his model's pose — He flatters her — and she drinks it in — evidently she loves his flattery — He has her loosen her hair about shoulders — she is puzzled — he tells her it is a beautiful pose — she smiles up at him — he fusses around her — at last satisfied retreats to easel — smiles at her —

3. Separate the subjoined "scene" into its correct component scenes for the camera.*

WAITING ROOM OF GREAT RAILWAY STATION

Gates to trains along one side. Large crowd awaiting trains. Jack and Mamie seated awaiting train. A. T. & S. F. gate is opened. Conductors and ticket punchers take places. Jack tells Mamie it is time to get aboard. They rise and go to gate. Jack shows ticket — auditor examines it

*The Spoken Leader or Cut-In to be inserted in this exercise is a part of the scene in which it occurs. It may be written in caps and lower-case and underscored, or it may be capitalized in full, with or without underscoring. See the continuity in Chapter 23.

for a moment — returns it and explains that it is on another road — the U. P. — Jack and Mamie embarrassed — Jack says — "Come on, we'll try the other gate" — takes Mamie's arm and they worm their way from crowd toward another gate. Jack looks at ticket in hand humorously and smiles — Mamie bursts into girlish laughter — snuggles up close to Jack — Cut

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER XVII

CONTINUITY AND ABRUPTNESS IN DEVELOPMENT

The present chapter has been included in the cinema section of this book because the effects consequent on a lack of continuity are more obtrusive in the scenario than in the synopsis. Indeed, the synoptist may, to an extent, disguise the abrupt transitions in his story by a skilful use of language; but a scenarist, having no such camouflage, must let the arrangement of his scenes speak for itself — tell its shortcomings to the world.

Continuity is, as we have seen, a continuous flow of the action in one direction — a progress from part to part. Where the story is told in scene units, the flow of action from scene to scene is especially noticeable. Thus, if, in a story, action is going on simultaneously in several different localities, it is the office of continuity to gather together and display these separated strands of occurrence in a succession which shall carry them forward toward a single climax or point of greatest tension.

Unity of composition is maintained by keeping the main strand dominant, weaving it in and out among the threads of lesser import.

In view of these prefacing remarks, we may infer that continuity is concerned with the transition

or movement from one part or unit of the story to another. This is its chief concern; but transitions in a photodrama, as in life, are abrupt or gradual. Continuity is the art of so combining the abrupt with the graded as to give the effect of an UNINTERRUPTED passage from the critical conditions of a story through its excitant to its climax and close. While this principle is most applicable to the scenario (aptly called the "continuity"), yet wherever it is pertinent to the synopsis, attention will be drawn to that form of dramatic narrative.

ABRUPTNESS AND GRADATION

Abruptness in the connecting events of life's episodes is as common as its antithesis, gradation. Since both occur as a frequent manifestation of life's progressive movement, it is natural to find both in the arts, especially in the arts of MOVEMENT which represent their effects as occurrences in TIME, such as music or the drama. Abruptness is a sudden transition; gradation is a gradual passage or junction.

Perhaps an illustration is necessary to distinguish the two methods. Read carefully the story outlined below:

The plot had to do with a reformed miscreant, who was engaged to marry his beautiful confederate in crime, and for whom he had just undergone a servitude of one year in a penal institution. He chances to be near at the instant a rather prominent millionaire of the community faints from heart trouble, and, assisting the sufferer into his automobile, accompanies him to his home. The affluent invalid evinces his gratitude by affording the convict an opportunity to earn an honest

livelihood, in fact, by placing him in charge of some mines remote from the city. Meanwhile, the woman to whom he is engaged determines, before entering upon the untried paths of virtue, to test them out by way of experiment. She accordingly visits her lover's benefactor and represents herself to be a sister anxious to hear of his success at the mines. This ruse is successful; for the wealthy invalid succumbs to her charm without more ado. Thus far, in the play, the story was developed in detail by graduated narrative; but abruptness followed at once, in that, after the invalid's interest in this woman was clearly established, a caption (or leader) was inserted, explaining that, "The inevitable follows later." And the next scene showed the wedding eve, at the moment when the bride tosses her bouquet to the bridesmaids assembled about her. In other words, it was UNNECESSARY to externalize the somewhat tedious details of the courtship. The important fact is that the benefactor unwittingly marries the girl, thinking her to be his EMPLOYEE'S SISTER, while HE is toiling away at the mines many miles distant, intent upon making a profession for himself in order that he may marry her. Thus, we observe one of those abrupt transitions so often necessary for economy's sake; since few spectators care to sit through events unimportant to the main action, however interesting in themselves these might be made.

As a further example, this time illustrating the GRADED effects desirable for the illusion of reality in a play, let us observe a photoplay whose plot rotates about a married man, who, loving his wife and baby boy, is allured by one of the venal

women that are forever spoiling someone's life. The primrose woman, in this play, has a child by the ensnared husband. Foreseeing the inevitable tangle when her daughter shall have grown up, the illicit mother importunes her paramour to divorce his lawful wife and marry her. This he cannot do. So, she leaves her child alone in her apartments, taking passage on an ocean-going steamer, from which she attempts suicide. She is, however, rescued by humble coast folk far from her city home. With them she now renews the strand of life. Meanwhile, the wife, warned by a rival for the primrose woman's favors, discovers the deserted baby and a suicide note left behind and decides that it is her duty to adopt it, at least for the sake of appearances. She continues to live with her husband only because of their own child, a boy. Later on, when the boy is somewhat advanced in age, his parents are drowned in an accident, their adopted daughter escaping, however, and being rescued by the same folk who formerly resuscitated the suicide. In the act of bringing the girl to life, the mother recognizes her child, who has been cast up to her by this miraculous chance. She brings this daughter up to womanhood in happy unconcern of the identity of the father. It is patent from the narrative thus far set down that the boy, now sole heir of his deceased father and mother, will meet this girl and fall in love with her, since here we have to do with one of those "ready made" situations we have been told to avoid. In truth, this is the very thing that happens; for when it becomes necessary for him to seek the coast in search of renewed health, after too much of wine,

women and song, he finds his way to the very spot where reside mother and daughter. At the threshold of marriage, the children are separated by the unexpected knowledge that they are half brother and sister. The unfortunate girl throws herself straightway into the sea which once cast her up.

Ignoring the machine-made character of the foregoing melodrama, we may observe that it proceeds by a gradual passage from part to part, depending on the effects of coincidence to relieve it of unnecessary detail. It is the principle, and not this plot, which is upheld for the aspirant's study.

The cardinal principle to be deduced from these examples is that an abrupt transition may be employed where unnecessary or tiresome details should be omitted. On the other hand, gradation is demanded when the details of transition, for any reason, become important. For instance, the courtship of the first outline was unnecessary in itself and was excluded; but had the woman been one whose past was spotless, the transition from the old love to the new would have called for more detail, and events leading to marriage would have demanded recording, else we could not have accepted the situation as being, even slightly, PROBABLE. As shown it savored of "movie hokum."

But the matter has another aspect no less paramount of consideration. Innumerable screen plays are divested of all resemblance to actuality by the ease, the quickness, the fortuity with which the hero attains success from a lowly start, or the heroine finds happiness in the conquering

influence of her beauty. There is too often no suggestion of effort, labor, struggle or TIME. Things fall out with a precision that obtrudes its mechanism upon the bored and skeptical spectator.

Suppose, for illustration, that a character starts from New York to Los Angeles. In actuality the trip requires about one week. If in the next scene the traveler is shown arriving at his destination, the essential element of time consumed in a long journey is lacking. Or, if in one scene the hero is in rags and in the next wears the apparel of luxury, the effect is artificial because of a too abrupt transition. The point is that we should be made to FEEL that some time has elapsed, or that some labor has been expended, to bring about such contrasts in the story. How such an illusion may be fostered by the scenarist will be gathered in the detailed discussion of the following cinema devices now to be taken up.

CINEMA NARRATIVE

A number of well-known cinematic artifices employed to forward the film narrative involve in some degree the principle of continuity. For instance, reminiscence or retrospect, introduced by the "fade" or "dissolve." Here we have the recollections or emotional complexes of a character, something which, happening in the past, afterwards recurs and exerts an influence upon the personage, acting as an accelerator or deterrent. If the reminiscence be brief, the abruptness of transition from the main current of the story and back again is pardonable as a necessary convention; but, as sometimes happens, if the retrospect

be lengthy, continuity is given a severe wrench, an inexcusable dislocation.

It is for this, as well as for reasons stated in prior chapters, that retrospect is censured. Usually, a story, having important facts or events antecedent to the critical conditions, begins with the details precedent — even though they antedate the critical conditions by a number of years — in order to eliminate retrospect and enhance continuity. Thus, in "Orphans of the Storm," the violence by which the de Vaudreys rid themselves of a commoner and his child formed a kind of prologue to the story. The critical conditions lay in later circumstances, such as the blindness of Louise and the innocence of Henriette, when added to the times or period. But the details precedent, which were organically related to the plot, had either to prelude the story or be consigned to retrospect. Mr. Griffith took the more dramatic alternative.

The cut-back, used to flash from one location to another, to show concurrent incidents, makes for abrupt transitions, but its continuity lies in the drawing together of the separated strands, the suggestion of an impending effect which convergence of the incidents will surely entail. Proper manipulation of the cut-back requires that it be applied only where it shall have a dramatic bearing upon the progress of the story. This rule works as well for the synopsis as for the scenario.

The so-called "continuity shot" is a scene used to bridge over from event to event. It fills in the too noticeable hiatus between two important scenes. If the hero, for example, leaves his apartment for that of his fiance, the

bridging scenes that show him as he enters his car and its arrival at destination supply a gradation not to be neglected.

Abrupt transitions, only partly condonable, exist when a leader announces "Twenty years later," or in changes of location smoothed over by leaders proclaiming that, "John Doe has meanwhile gone to Mexico," or the like. The illusion of reality is shattered by such sudden, unceremonious and blunt variations of time or locality. The synopsis, like the continuity, may suffer from similar crudity of structure.

Art demands that the illusions of time and effort be preserved. This we may do by the sequence of events. While a character is journeying afar we may take up another current of the action, giving him time to get to his objective. Again, if mutations of setting or locality are necessitated, we may lead up to them gradually by unfolding all of the action confined to other LOCALES, so that when the change is made it shall be progressive, and not retrogressive. The synopsis, as well as the scenario, has an illusion to be maintained. Its effects should be supported by continuity (in the artistic meaning).

Either the scenario or synopsis, which is abrupt in its connections, should be given continuity by the methods outlined.

Continuity and sequence may be thought of as synonymous principles with one exception. That peculiar succession of details (in a synopsis) or of scenes (in a scenario), which gives rise to specifically dramatic effects, necessitates that the scenarist unfold or unwind his story first a few scenes here, then a few scenes there, thus passing

to and fro across his segments of narrative. He cannot disclose immediately all that takes place in any one setting or location; since that would demolish the structure of suspense and impair all unexpectedness. Thus, while continuity might demand a continuous line of narrative, sequence requires permutations or transitions, many of them abrupt. Study of the scenario in this book will reveal to the aspirant the joint agencies of sequence and continuity collaborating to forward the story to a dramatic conclusion. Further study of current releases at the playhouse will augment and illuminate these remarks.

Workshop Notes

In the detailed synopsis the student should note the breaks at those points where a cut-back to Arthur is suggested. The method is sudden or abrupt; the effect is later to converge with others and produce a dramatic quickening of the action. While the change of locality from Blytheville to New York is of necessity sudden, yet it is a PROGRESSIVE shift of scene. The impression of time spent and effort put forth lies in the school scenes; for Anne does not succeed until she has STUDIED her art. A suggestion of retrospect is found in the reference to the old orchard and her early friendship for George.

The continuity of Chapter 23 offers examples of the cut-back, lapses of time and changes of place which the student ought to seek out for himself. As to necessary "continuity shots," look up the following scenes: 15, 36, 37, 40; and others easily found.

Between scenes 21 and 22, also 29 and 30, leaders bridge gaps in the action, but, as the intermediate happenings are not important, economy of effect demands abrupt transitions. Note the passage from scene 33 to 34. No leader is used. Is one necessary?

Continuity Exercises

1. Select from the screen a photoplay which exhibits a want of continuity between its events and suggest scenes to be inserted to remedy the effect —
2. Select from the screen a photoplay which is padded with continuity "shots" or other excess scenes and suggest deletions that would not impair the effect —
3. Has the following scene-outline the proper continuity, and, if not, can you write in scenes that shall improve it?

Scene* — Parlor of simple, rural home — Albert tells his old mother he must go to city to seek work. She is fearful, but he reassures her. His sweetheart enters and he tells her of his decision — she is encouraging —

Scene* — Steps of home — Albert, grip packed, ready to start — mother and sweetheart admonishing him of city dangers — he promises to be careful. They come down steps and walk toward camera — Sweetheart gives Albert her picture for his watch — they put it in watch —

*Spoken or Cut-In leaders are unnecessary in a scene-outline, which is not a regular continuity but merely a plan of an action — a working plan. The student may omit them from his own scenes and take for granted their presence in the above outline.

Scene — Close-up showing picture in front of watch —

Scene — Room in boarding-house in city. Albert reading —

Scene — Dining room dowstairs — tables set — gong on wall — servant rings gong —

Scene — Close-up of gong.

Scene — Albert hears gong — throws book aside — looks at self in mirror — exit —

Scene — Dining room — boarders eating — Albert seated at table with several flashy young men who wink at each other and then introduce themselves to him — All get friendly very quickly —

Scene — Albert back in his room — writing a letter — hears knock on door — goes to it and admits the young men who hail him as a brother — They begin to talk very confidentially — One unpacks a kit of funny looking tools —

Scene — Close-up of burglar's outfit —

Scene* — Same as before close-up. Albert told he can make a big haul if he will join in with them — he is reassured — it will be safe and easy — he is about to yield — afraid of their ridicule — They signify they must hurry — Albert takes out watch — sees picture — suddenly remembers promises —

*Spoken or Cut-In leaders are unnecessary in a scene-outline, which is not a regular continuity but merely a plan of an action — a working plan. The student may omit them from his own scenes and take for granted their presence in the above outline.

Scene — Close-up of picture.

Scene — Back to room — Albert undecided — one of the crooks taunts him — he makes decision and refuses to go with them — they are angry — jeer him — he orders them out — all exeunt but Albert — who gazes lovingly at picture — Etc.

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER XVIII

TACTICS AND BUSINESS; MANAGING DETAILS

Continuity writing, especially the adaptation of plays and novels to the screen, requires a deal of technical and tactical ability, often acquired only after years of experience with the producers. Whether the beginner will ever make an adaptation, whether he expects ever to become another Monte Katterjohn or Anita Loos, he should by all means, master the general principles of effective cinematic composition. Success as a synopsis writer will bring opportunities to write continuity, and, while authors there are who can never be more than second-rate at this branch of photodrama, yet a working knowledge of the subject should be a part of every synoptist's equipment.

The gestures, movements and facial expressions by which the actors externalize the emotions, the obstacles and accelerators of a scene, are called BUSINESS. The entire pantomime of a scene is its business. And business, with the exception of an occasional insert or dialogue leader, is the content of all scenes of whatever class; of normals, distance shots, perspectives or close-ups. (Note —a semi-close-up is a scene closer than normal but not a close-up.)

There is, however, another element of scenes which we may call simply DETAIL. This includes those things not belonging to business or insertions. Thus, the furniture described in a scene, the details of setting, any accessories to the background, all these are detail. Again, in a perspective scene of a city street, the crowds passing along, the traffic, do not belong to the business but to the detail. In view of this distinction, scenes may be said to be composed of business, insertions, and detail.

Of the insert and dialogue leader nothing will be said in this chapter. At present we are concerned with business and detail. Their choice and manipulation are of the greatest importance in the writing of continuity, forming one of the cardinal attributes of TACTICAL skill in scenario construction. By way of a general classification, it may be stated that business and detail are important in the creation of the following effects:

(1) Business and detail are essential to lifelikeness in a photoplay action, either aiding in the delineation of a lifelike picture, or detracting from it by their conventionality or artificiality.

(2) They are conducive to the effect of originality or novelty.

(3) They are very dramatic or very undramatic, according to their choice and manner of employment.

(4) They are materially pictorial in their nature or they may be the reverse, marring the pictorial effect.

As to the first of these, lifelikeness, no better rule can be given than to go back to life itself for gestures, emotions or detail to express any

given situation. On the other hand, that which is stale, outworn or conventional should be avoided if possible. For example, the manners of a social votary are not true of simple, rural folk; and if the innocence and directness of the milkmaid be loaned to the "flapper" heroine of a story, the effect is certain to be artificial and unnatural. Whoever visits the photoplayhouse regularly will understand what is meant by lifelikeness or artificiality.

In the photoplay "Married People," a natural tactical detail was seen where the wife, alone in the house with a debauche, thinks she hears someone and, seeing a grotesque shadow, she fires, hitting a child who is wandering in the house. The strategy of the play was not saved by good tactics; for the story ended with the husband's penitent letter and the aftermath was an anticlimax.

When we come to originality, we have a somewhat more difficult problem to solve. So ordinary or familiar are most of the emotions, events, or even situations seen in the "movies" that novelty of tactics, especially of business, seems a chimera. As a rule, most business is of necessity like or similar to that of other stories already shown. This we cannot help; but we can see to it that originality is injected into those portions of a story which admit of it, or in which it is invited by original situations. Many stories are conventional of plot and detail from beginning to end. Such a story was seen in "Over the Border," one of those plays glorifying the Royal Mounted Police. A conventional story should have some novelty of tactics to offset its strategical weakness.

"The Whispering Chorus" illustrates what may be called DRAMATIC detail and business. John Trimble, who holds a responsible position with a great firm, is tempted to peculations, and, while struggling with his temptations, his employer, who chances to pass through the outer offices, halts at Trimble's desk and rests an arm upon it. The cuff of his overcoat is enriched by luxurious fur, and Trimble, fascinated by this symbol of ease, covertly runs the handle of his pen through the fur, observing its elasticity. After his employer has passed on, we understand the course of Trimble's thoughts; we know that he will succumb to the allurement of easy wealth. It was dramatic tactics. Again, in his prison cell, Trimble is visited by the faces of those who have, in his past life, played a role, good or bad, happy or miserable, floating around him in an agonizing vision. The undramatic way to suggest the same thing would have been for him to write someone a letter telling his thoughts, or to introduce dialogue.

And, finally, where the cinematic or pictorial element is at stake, business and detail should be carefully selected. In the preceding photoplay, dialogue or inserts introduced to convey Trimble's mental agonies would have been less pictorial and, therefore, less effective than the vision within the frame (in the same scene). Other examples of tactical blunders may be gotten directly from the screen.

As a general rule, it may be said that tactics, no matter how good, are a poor substitute for strategy. In the photoplay "The Real Adventure," good tactics could not maintain the suspense,

for we are sure that the husband will return to his wife. There is no sufficient obstacle to prevent his change of attitude.

The Writing of Business

In the synopsis business is usually secondary to narrative; but in a continuity business is THE narrative. A continuity is told in scenes of pantomime or business; and the aspirant must give it study. The business of the scenes should be minutely described. The novice is more likely to write scenes too briefly than too fully. No bits of action essential to the effect should be left out, although most directors will make changes in the most elaborate or voluminous of scenarios. Of course not all scenes need be long and elaborate. The length depends on the PURPOSE of a scene, its effect, as well as on the amount of detail to be mentioned. Some authors describe setting and furnishings at length in the continuity; others use the method of suggestion (see Chapter 23). The outsider cannot afford to be too specific.

The difference between dramatic and comedy business is not great. Serious business may easily be burlesqued into comedy; comedy is readily divested of its humor by a few changes. In comedy, detail usually plays a large part. Funny makeups, funny costumes, outlandish objects, and other details are employed. Or the comic subtitle or leader, containing a pun, a slangy witticism or other similar material, is injected to bolster up or enliven a scene now and then. The business is generally fast, exaggerated and burlesqued. In comedy-drama more reliance is placed on situations having a humorous basis.

Only now and then does the business descend to slap-stick or horse-play. Few writers can produce good farce comedy; fewer are capable of good comedy-drama. The rewards are large for authors who can write effective comedy.

Expressive Business

The management of business calls for thought. Many ideas ordinarily requiring speech or dialogue to express may be conveyed by good business. For example, in scene 117 of the continuity there is a spoken leader by which Duane tries to engineer a bribe. In scene 120 the doctor decides to hold the money and think over the matter, and another leader is used. But this latter idea might have been conveyed entirely by business, coming as it does after the leader of scene 117. Other similar examples occur in any scenario.

Business also may take the place of a close-up where certain objects or actions are well known to the audience. A business-office scene may show a desk on which there is an electric push-button. If a character is seen to push the button, it is unnecessary to show a close-up of the bell in an outer office. It is understandable if a sleepy employee is suddenly aroused to clap her hands over her ears and rush to the private office.

Business and Detail in the Synopsis

In the synopsis, description of business may generally be restricted to that which is novel, original or dramatic, the continuity writer being depended on to supply the bulk. But as for detail, the synopsis should contain all descriptions

of setting or background essential to a vivid story.* The synoptist may possess ideas or information valuable to the continuity writer; or the whole tone or value of a story may be enhanced by a timely detail or bit of effective business.

Weak strategy in a synopsis cannot be concealed from the expert by minutely described details. If the plot and the characters are weak, the story is weak, despite clever style or development. Do not, therefore, conclude that mere detail or business will enable one to fool a producer into accepting a story whose foundation is defective. Your script will come home in due time, an eloquent if silent reminder of its defects.

SETTING AS A DETAIL

Perhaps the most important single detail of any scene is its SETTING. The pictorial nature of the cinema-play raises setting to a plane of importance it does not occupy in the novel or dialogue drama. Setting may be defined as that BACKGROUND against which some part of the action occurs. A SET is interior or exterior but ARTIFICIAL, as a bedroom or a STREET BUILT for the purpose. A location is a natural setting, such as a NATURAL street, terrace or woodland. A hotel lobby, courtroom, waterfall, roadside, or the like, is a setting for the photoplay. We may classify settings, according to their offices or effects, as follows:

(1) Settings may show the customs, manners or morals of a people or period.

*The studio continuity sometimes runs above 1000 pages, due to the necessity of prolix descriptions of sets and properties for each scene; for the scenes are not filmed numerically but by sets and locations, and the data cannot be carried in memory from scene to scene.

(2) Settings may express a section, such as South or West.

(3) Settings often influence the motives of the characters.

(4) Settings may keep pace with the mutations of the narrative.

(5) Settings express a mood — an accelerator or impediment.

(6) Settings augment the situations occurring in them, hamonizing with characters and conflicts.

(7) Settings are organic, being grounded in the plot and tactics.

As an illustration of the first, "Orphans of the Storm," or such a novel as "A Tale of Two Cities," may be cited. The poverty and degradation of the rabble, the luxury and insolence of the parasitic classes, these are strikingly typified in the settings. As the action progresses, the settings are put to new functions, now expressing the moral relapse of people long held under the lash, the relaxation from bondage to unrestrained freedom.

No one who visits the playhouses can have failed to observe that settings typify and expound sections and sectionalism more forcefully than any other one detail of a photoplay. The old Southern plantation homestead, the New England farm, the Western ranch, the Eastern country-home, all these are sectional, expressive, and explanatory of a slice of our motley population.

From the dramatic point of view, the influence of setting upon the characters is, undoubtedly, of greatest import to the playwright, who cannot regard detail from the bias of the art critic, but must think of it solely as a part of the dramatic

tactics. In the photoplay, "The Song of Life," a most abominable production from many angles, the effect of setting upon a character is shown in the repulsion of the young wife at the sights and sounds borne in upon her from the surrounding tenements. We can understand and, perhaps, sympathize with her desire to escape from these discords. Again, in the same story, the effect (exaggerated) of the desert wastes upon the city-bred wife is dramatic, even if wrought by a clumsy hand.

That a setting may express a mood nobody doubts. John Trimble in his barren cell, tortured by the faces of those he has loved or hated, wronged or protected, offers an example. The murderous ENSEMBLE of Parisian cut-throats in "Orphans of the Storm," assembled in the great hall of the Tribunal, is suggestive of the period, and aptly supplies a reason for the heroic resignation of those tried there in the name of justice. It is plain that the guillotine awaits them; that is the mood incited.

As a dramatic narrative is unreeled, settings may undergo changes in harmony with the mutations of the action. For example, the lowly cottage home, once well-kept and cozy, with a little yard rioting in the display of flowers, may, when the hero returns years later, worn and needy, have fallen into partial decay, shabby, rotting and given over to weeds. Thus, the little home keeps pace with the fortunes of its former occupant. This is, of course, not true of all stories, but it is often a cogent way to accentuate the change in the status of a character.

In view of the instances just given, we may say that settings harmonize with the situations occurring within them, offering a bit of contrast to some characters, a mood to others, an accelerator to one, an obstacle to another. It would not do, for example, to have the scenes in which a man is on trial for his life occur in a courtroom filled with flowers, decorated in colorful and striking patterns (color is merely suggested), and crowded with a gay and festive throng. The harmony of the situation is preserved by the dignity, somberness, formality and gravity of the scene; the setting should express the dominant motif or the underlying emotion.

No setting is worth while which is not an organic part of the narrative. For example, a story laid in the Canadian rockies may very properly include many scenes of mountain beauty and grandeur. But, on the other hand, a story environed in Louisiana should not jump to the mountains merely for the sake of their scenic effect. There should be an organic reason for the settings in a photoplay; too many releases have in the past relied upon the scenery of certain localities to support the spectator's interest in an otherwise inferior story weakly told.

In the synopsis settings are, as a rule, described briefly. But, if any of the sets are unusual, such as buildings or interiors of historical interest, or places expressive of peculiar sectionalism or provincialism, or for any other reason, they may be described at length, omitting only details not of pictorial value.

Hints on the Choice of Settings

The scenarist should choose settings according to the foregoing principles; but he should ever have an eye to variation and novelty in the locations. If his story for instance be laid on the farm, some variety and contrast of settings should be sought in the organic texture of the play. It may be possible to show scenes in the neighboring city, in a contiguous mining region, or in any one of a number of places. Merely be certain that they are organic. In "The Count of Monte Cristo," a number of marine views are essential; whereas, in another play, it might not be possible to include water scenes while still remaining true to the organism of the plot.

Outdoor locations are less expensive to the producer than elaborately planned and constructed interiors; hence, the more exteriors possible in a photoplay the better. It is often quite possible to eliminate certain interiors in favor of good outdoor locations. If an action can as easily be expressed out of doors as in some expensive interior, choose the former. Again, the more scenes that an author can assign to an interior already once used in the story the better. This prevents the building of another set for these scenes and saves money for the producer.

Unseasonable exteriors should be avoided, if possible. But climate has today little influence on production. In the play, "Beyond the Rocks" quantities of salt judiciously spread around gave the impression of snow on the Alpine summit. This same device is often used. The most important matter is to have contrast of setting and

location; but only the good story deserves the large expenditure of money often necessary.

Workshop Notes

The detailed synopsis offers settings and business worthy of the aspirant's careful consideration. Also in the continuity, the use of business and detail is especially elaborate. The study of these specimens should be fortified by study of current releases at the playhouses.

Playwriting Exercises

1. From the screen select examples of original and dramatic business; also stereotyped business. Substitute more desirable business wherever you can.
2. Revise a synopsis you have written, improving the settings and business; look especially for originality, dramatic value, appropriateness and pictorial effect.
3. If you have no synopsis, write one from a short-story of your selection (or a novel) paying special attention to settings and business. Note — a synopsis does not need the minutely described business of the continuity.
4. Supply original detail and business for the following scene:

HUMBLE BEDROOM.

Bed with patched covers in foreground. Doctor, nurse and relatives surrounding

bed. Sufferer tries to rise weakly but falls back. Stiffens. Doctor feels pulse — listens to heart — shakes head mournfully and pulls sheet up over face of corpse, signifying that the patient has passed on. Nurse shakes head mournfully at relatives, each of whom shakes head at others and then all weep in unison. One makes sign of the cross.

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER XIX

PLAUSIBILITY IN DETAILS; IMPROBABILITY

Earlier chapters, such as that on coincidence, have touched the subject of plausibility in the photodrama, principally from the point of view of the story as a whole, or of its leading events as entities. The matter is, however, so important, especially on the side of DETAIL, that it is deemed advisable to examine the plausibility of details in this cinema division of the book. For, if there is any method or procedure by which a photoplay may acquire lifelikeness, truth to life, plausibility, it is most certainly in the choice of details, the tactical embellishments of a strategic framework, the flesh and blood which prevent the skeleton from rattling its bones in our faces.

That which is plausibile is apparently true, momentarily acceptable, SURFICIALLY lifelike. If a thing be implausible, it does not conform to this definition. Probability has much the same meaning, save that it goes deeper under the surface, does not stop at the externalities. For this reason, perhaps, we should speak of the PROBABILITY of EVENTS and of the plausibility of details. The present chapter mainly concerns details; since we have now reached that point of the study given over to tactics.

In the beginning, we may enquire the attitude of spectators (postulating a so-called "average audience") toward a cinematic action being portrayed by the shadowy players of the silversheet. We may approach plausibility from the position of the theatre chair, that dark vantage which the "average spectator" has occupied less and less frequently in the past few years of "movie" melodrama and "hokum."

From the Onlooker's Viewpoint

We might say that, in the tension and onrush of a progressing dramatic narrative, the spectators do not pause or stop short to **CHALLENGE** certain premises of **FACT** as to their plausibility, or to inquire too closely into subsequent developments from the premises. For, if upon their faces they bear the indelible stamp of **PLAUSIBILITY**, they are acceptable without cavil. They are, as it were, matters of course; as it were, they are confirmations of current ideas and opinions of the audience. However, let them appear impossible and, be they ever so easily demonstrable as things that could occur, or might occur, or have occurred in life, the audience revokes them, denies them, refuses to give them dramatic credence, so to say; the audience comes up short upon an abyss of fact which cannot be bridged to its satisfaction. For this reason, perhaps, Aristotle's dictum to the effect that **PROBABLE** impossibility is preferable to **IMPROBABLE** possibility is often heard from the mouths of the critics and the technicians.

Probability, as it would appear to follow, is, as associated with **SINGULAR** events, conditioned

upon a kind of surface probability, a VENEER of fact which passes muster without necessitating upon the part of the audience any pauses or readjustments of its mental attitude toward the events. To singular events, as meant here, are opposed, however, mere chances, or coincidences. What is meant is those causes and effects which are distinctly unusual or extraordinary. On the side of detail, the effect is analogous, the spectators rejecting only those details which, obviously, are anachronistic,* anomalous, far-fetched or unsuited to the action. Aristotle's standard applies equally well to details as to occurrences; for even the costumes or furnishings may fail to carry conviction to the audience.

What, then, is plausibility as we mean to define it? What is plausible improbability in contradistinction to unacceptable probability? First of all, be it said that plausibility is derived always from two equally germane sources; both experience and INEXPERIENCE with life. Where in the average spectator these two balance — maintain an equlibrium — the general run of photoplays passes unchallenged as to fact; but let there be an overweight upon either side and immediately your onlooker becomes querulous and caviling. Now, it happens that in the crowd there are few individuals in whom experience overbalances inexperience, in whom there is a want of equilibrium; therefore, events, which to the largely experienced smack offensively of the artificial,

*Anachronisms often occur in costumes or setting. In a photoplay dealing with events in COLONIAL days a modern BRASS-BED was used; and in another story a character reappeared "after twenty years" in the SAME COSTUME!

withstand the shallower scrutiny of the less enlightened playgoer.

Thus, plausibility appears to be based upon what we have experienced in life the greater number of times, or have got at second hand with numerous repetitions, as well as upon what we lack of experience and knowledge. Each day, for example, we read in the newspapers of occurrences totally outside of our own experiences. If, however, these coincide with passably numerous instances of which we have authentic second-hand knowledge, they seem plausible — meaning intelligible with reference to life as we know it to be; or, at least, they are in the nature of things with which we are not wholly unfamiliar. But, upon the other hand, and removed from actuality, those events of which we have no experience, or even second-hand knowledge, want for plausibility, because no matter if they COULD happen, we deem them too singular, irregular or unlikely. We ourselves have never heard of or seen an incident of the kind, nor can we recollect any links of causation by which it might be brought about under like circumstances; it is therefore rejected.

How to Create Plausibility

The secret of a plausible narrative lies in so choosing and combining lifelike or acceptable details as to give to improbable events, coincidences, and the like, an air of truthfulness, verisimilitude, or conviction; and this rule may be applied down to the very settings and pantomime. Cause and effect is only a part of plausibility; since we depend on the external details for momentary acceptability. Thus, in "The Prisoner of

Zenda" the course by which a commoner changes places with a king is only acceptable when referred to naturalness of tactics or detail.

Several illustrations from the screen will clarify the point.

The first of them is a photoplay comedy. In this story, a charge of explosive is placed in a piano, in such a manner that, when a certain key is struck, it will be fired by a cap to which the fuse is connected, leading to a presumably fatal incident. Although, in life, this would be almost if not absolutely impossible to accomplish, saying that the average force employed in executing a composition on the instrument were used in striking this particular key, yet, in the play, much of the comedy and tension hinged on the belief of the audience that an explosion was to occur. As one of the characters struck the keys idly, always missing the fatal key by one, the audience held its breath, so to speak. Few, if any, of the spectators paused to question the device. There was a gloss of plausibility over the details, traceable to the spectators' limitations of knowledge, as much as to anything else. In other words, what the onlookers, at the same time knew and did not know from the physical and technical points of view, passed the incident off successfully. Thus, we observe that what the spectators do not know, especially as related to details, is often more a help than a hindrance to the veneering over of impossibilities and the like.

As an example of humorous detail skilfully handled, take a scene in which a bashful swain comes to court his rustic idol, hesitating at the

gate where he stands rooted in the throes of timidity. Now it is a well-known fact that the feet of a diffident person perform gyrations and assume attitudes revealing nervousness of this kind. Thus, considerable fun is extracted from a scene when we are shown the feet of the hesitating suitor in comic attitudes between uncertainty and determination. Again, take an accident. A vehicle containing two of the principal characters collides with a fast train and both are killed. Skilful cutting back shows the runaway horse plunging toward the railway crossing, then the oncoming train. Both arrive at the same instant. Immediately thereafter, a "flash" scene is used, showing the horse of the unfortunates now free of the shafts and trotting uncertainly beside the track with part of the torn harness still on its back.* This flash tells the story, as it were. It is very effective; for by this bit of lifelike or natural detail we are persuaded to accept the death of the unfortunates as inevitable, with no necessity for a gruesome exhibition. The detail is plausible and convincing; whereas, the bodies would have to simulate violent death to a point utterly revolting or censorable — a point beyond that possible to a dummy — in order to pass muster without question.

In the screen comedy, "Our Leading Citizen," we had both plausible event and detail. A lazy lawyer likes better to fish than to quote latin for His Honor's delectation. But in France he meets the town's richest girl and she admires his war

*This was followed by a scene showing a crowd of seriously excited persons gathered about the wrecked vehicle and the trainmen running back to investigate.

record. When they return she determines to shake him out of his groove, and she accordingly induces him to enter politics. He refuses to be subsidized by the bosses, her brother included, so they "frame up" on him and, while he is fishing, issue a challenge for him to meet one of their political henchmen in debate. The girl, seeing the trick, sends him a copy of the local newspaper by her brother's speed-boat and he returns in time to put the professional office-holder to flight. Here we have lifelike strategy; and the tactics by which it was maneuvered might be called plausible, for they saved a light plot, lacking in suspense, from an utter collapse. Where there is no complication, or insufficient complication, plausible detail is a necessity.

Continuity and Synopsis

From the cinematic side, the selection of detail is of importance preëminent. The characters should be placed in plausible environments, should react plausibly to the situations in which they are thrown, expressing suitable emotions and entertaining natural motives for their actions. Every scene of a continuity should be built up by plausible business and detail. In the synopsis the detail should be no less carefully chosen, making certain that verisimilitude is given to the events described.

An Illustration

An example of the larger plausibility of strategy by which the logical development of a character is brought about — as well as some of the little

touches, the minutiæ of tactical plausibility — may be found in the following outline of a photoplay entitled, "His Back Against the Wall."

Jeremy, the craven assistant to an East Side tailor, attends a dance where he is about to carry off the belle of the evening and a loving cup, when her former sweetheart appears and routs him, thus demonstrating to the crowd that Jeremy is a coward. Jeremy leaves New York for the West and is thrown off the freight train in a desert. He seeks refuge from the vast spaces of nature in a deserted cabin. Seeing two rough-looking men approach, he hides in the loft. The men are bandits who quarrel over the division of the loot they have brought in, the quarrel ending in the death of both. Jeremy is about to flee when the Sheriff arrives and mistakenly credits him with having killed the bandits. Jeremy becomes the hero of the settlement and falls in love with the Sheriff's daughter, but can never get an opportunity to explain the real cause of the bandits death. He is practicing with a revolver, when a cousin of one of the bandits sees his poor marksmanship and proclaims that Jeremy could not have killed his cousin. The Sheriff resentfully issues a challenge in Jeremy's name offering to "shoot it out" with the unbeliever, and Jeremy, weak in the knees, knows not how to escape his predicament. Surreptitiously he rides to town to have a secret look at his challenger, but there his horse gets away and approaches the group in which the cousin stands passing remarks about Jeremy. Seeing that he is in for it, and hearing some talk disparaging to the Sheriff's daughter, Jeremy lands on the jaw of his aggressor and then

shoots him, thus proving that such a worm CAN turn.

Only skilful tactics in forcing the poltroon into the action by having his horse get away and wander into the group of his enemies, thus forcing the coward's hand when he is brought face to face with his challenger, could save this plot from disaster; for no matter how possible it is of occurrence when referred to life, when shown on the screen it demanded the most plausible of DETAIL AND TACTICAL maneuvering.

THE PUBLIC'S PREFERENCES

That the general public demands plausible stories may be gathered from a contest recently conducted by Photoplay Magazine, in which people from all walks of life and all parts of the nation were encouraged to tell what they consider wrong with the "movies." The direct manner in which many of the criticisms pointed to lack of plausibility and lifelikeness is worthy of note by the aspiring scenarist. From the faults listed the ensuing brief excerpts should be pondered.

Said the critics: The photoplays do not show life as it is; they are not true to life; the stories are threadbare, stereotyped; they lack both truth and originality; they are inconsistent; they are impossible; they distort plot and characters; too much sameness; they are improbable.

Thus, whatever may be our individual opinions on the strictures just outlined, we should, if we are in earnest in our desire to write worthy screen material, pause to heed the stress laid upon truth to life and plausibility heard unmistakably

in the voice of the public — his master's voice to the photoplaywright. For, sooner or later, the public forces the producers to give it what it really admires in photoplay art.

Workshop Suggestions

In the detailed synopsis, we may observe that Anne's decision is urged on by plausible means; that she learns of Maribelle's danger by natural channels; that she discovers George's plot plausibly — and so on.

In the continuity the student may find several examples of plausible detail. Duane would not offer to bribe the doctor, if he did not regard him — mistakenly — as a man of low honor. There are many other examples.

Plausibility Exercises

1. Make the following outline, taken from a photoplay called "Fools First" plausible by the addition of detail, filling in all hiatuses:

   Tommy Fraser, a crook, deems himself a misfit in the underworld and confines his activities to forgery (being a penman). He is finally nabbed and sent up for a term. After his release, he meets a girl he formerly knew and they plan a "job" worth while. She secures him a position in a bank which they plan to rob. They meet at the railway station, he with the stolen money in a bag, but he has remorse of conscience, and, finally, decides to return the money.

Meanwhile, crooks have broken into the bank and, finding nothing, meet Tommy as he returns. They knock him out and take his bag. Tommy insists on making a full confession to the bank president, who, after he has heard it, tells Tommy that he (the president) and the girl are both ex-convicts themselves. Tommy, angry at being so cleverly deceived by the girl, is about to leave, when she makes known to him her willingness to reform him for life and he, having been in love all the time, accepts.

2. Test a synopsis you have written for plausibility of event and detail.

3. Is the detail of the continuity in Chapter 23 plausible? Can you rewrite any of the details so as to improve them on the score of plausibility?

4. Select from the screen an implausible story and suggest detail whereby it may be rendered truer to life and more acceptable.

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER XX

ART,* LIFE AND REALISM

This chapter was delayed until now because it was felt that a general survey of photodramatic structure and effect, with some attention to cinematic detail, should precede the special considerations implied in the present titular topics. We shall ponder a few of the important differences between art and life, ascertain the true place of realism in photodramatic art, and pass on to several related subjects of interest to every photoplay author. Art, it should be added, is of preeminent concern to the author; since the modern screen suffers at present acutely because of an absence, or erroneous view, of PHOTOPLAY ART, the panacea for which deplorable condition is in the hands of our future screen dramatists. The millennium of the screen will come when authors understand that the public is not fed the current "movie" fare because it WANTS it, but because the producers THINK it does.

LIFE AND ART

All of us know something about life; few of us have given much thought to art. Yet that there

*The Essentials of Aesthetics, 1906, and Baldwin's College Manual of Rhetoric.

is a difference between them we all perceive, even though we are utterly unable to define either the one or the other. Life we know is something we live, art something we appreciate, without our being able, in either case, to give a satisfactory reason. It appears, therefore, that some effort to show the more obvious dissimilitude between the two must precede the discussion of art-theory as applied to any art problem.

Let us define life as the material of art; for we all know that the higher arts draw their inspiration from life. The question is, what does art do to life; does it imitate it merely, or does it serve life up in slices of the raw, or does it change life and, if so, how? The answer may be found if we take the case of the painter, who transmutes some landscape to canvas. What does the painter do to nature and why?

First of all, let us examine his material. Let us suppose that he views the landscape from a certain angle. He wishes to get in certain details, to work out certain color-effects. But the landscape is full of ugly details as well as beautiful; his color-effect can be seen only at a certain time of day. As an artist, therefore, he is compelled to limit his scope, to select some details and omit others, to take some bodily from life and to alter some, to visit the scene again and again in order to study the desired color-effect. Now, what has the artist done? He has not merely imitated life, he COULD not; he has not painted a mere slice of nature, because, in the raw, nature was unsatisfactory; he HAS altered and rearranged the details of nature, but to what purpose?

The difference is that he has given nature (life) a significance; he has represented nature instead of merely imitating it. Art is, therefore a representation of nature. Nothing NEW has been created in the process; but existing material has been rearranged and altered, omitted or added to, according to memories of other scenes (called imagination), until the product has the significance desired by the individual impressed upon it, so that we call it "lifelike, original, artistic." The process has necessitated a product external to the artist, a painting; and this product has been created by means of a design or plan within the brain of the artist.

Turning now to photodramatic art for a parallel, we may say that dramatic art is human nature made significant. How? For an answer, let us turn to life. In life people thrown into critical situations, or pressed by conflict or obstacles, seldom say the things we want to hear them say or do the things we want to see them do; they fall short, fail to rise to our ideals; in brief, they lack SIGNIFICANCE. There is in the heart of every human being at times a throbbing desire to grasp the steering-wheel of life, to propel its events, to order its traffic, and to arraign its insignificant offenders before the bar and have them tell it to the judge in the manner we would like it told; in brief, to endow life with that significance we call the DRAMATIC.

This natural human desire is the result of an ideal toward which we all, perhaps unconsciously, strive: the ideal of the significant, of life given the cohesion and dignity of a design. If we are photoplaywrights, the result is a photodrama, a

product external to ourselves. In it we have created nothing new; we have merely rearranged and altered our material (human nature) until we have stamped upon it indelibly that significance which inspired our labors. The result may be pronounced "lifelike, original, dramatic."

Significance is the pole-star, the meridian, of the true author. The day is not far off when the work of the free-lance synoptist will be chosen primarily for significance instead of for a "new twist."

Realism in Photoplay Art

We have next to enquire the place occupied by REALISM in art. Complete realism would perforce cause us to select slices of life whose photographic fidelity to detail leaves nothing to be desired; but often the further we go upon the side of realism, the further we depart from significance, that criterion by which our status as dramatists is decided. If we are gross realists our cinema-plays degenerate into mere strings of thrilling episodes lifelike to the core but undramatic. On the other hand, our plays may be artificial enough in plot but mere vehicles for the display of realistic tactics by which the audience is tormented or horrified to the point of abhorrence.

True realism, we may conclude, exists in the photoplay merely as an auxiliary to significance — not as an object in itself. We aim, or should aim, to pictorialize the significance of life in a manner realistic, which means to select and reject, alter and rearrange until the effect is achieved, sometimes by realistic detail, sometimes by realistic events.

Our business as scenarists is not, therefore, to offer slices of that thing which puzzles and harasses us from cradle to grave; nor is it to imitate any persons or events. It is to represent life so as to add significance in a manner realistic or life-like. For example, if we are writing a story in which two characters famous in history meet (although in life they never met) we represent a conversation or pantomime between them, adding all realistic touches necessary to make the scene convincing. We do not imitate, because there is no meeting to be imitated; we do not photograph because we cannot be truly realistic about a thing which never happened in life!

Specific Problems

With the foregone generalities in mind, we may now approach the discussion of several problems calling for solution or avoidance in the work of all photoplay authors. They will be taken up separately, but not in any prearranged order.

Significance and the Moral Problem

As we have seen in discussing the moral problem of a play, every photodrama that aims to occupy a plane higher than that of "Old King Brady" or the latest "movie" shocker should have a moral problem, a special significance, a philosophical trend, tending to prove some fact of life worthy of our consideration when presented in the pictorially dramatic form. The moral problem is higher than mere significance with reference to the art methods of the photodramatist; it is a SPECIAL significance and marks out the photoplay which it colors as of superior qualities,

as the occupant of the higher plane of photoplay art. For, be it said, there are several planes of photoplay art, the lower of which are crowded with the program releases of the producers.

In the chapter on the Moral Problem there was outlined the story of a melodrama entitled, "The Devil's Pass-key." If the student has not hitherto classified this story according to its plane of significance, he may now be informed that such melodramas rest on that plane of art which is next to the lowest; for such a story proves no moral problem in the true sense, although it may have some significance with regard to the facts of life. No ending that could be suggested for this photoplay would lift it to the higher plane of serious drama. It has not been constructed to prove anything, to illustrate anything, to send the spectator home happier, more contented or ennobled because of the hour spent in the twilight of the screen. It proves a number of things, but yet no one of them. This is true of nearly all melodramas of the screen.

There is an occasional exception, however, which shows us with a sudden flash of illumination how effective the art of the photodrama might be, if controlled by men of ability and supplied by authors of intellect above that of the moron. For example, consider "The Whispering Chorus," a melodrama to be sure, but one calculated to drive home the higher significance of dramatic art. Was not the scene in the prison cell, the vision, a little lesson in life? Had it not a special significance; had not the story as a whole a philosophy? Or, take "Madame X," a famous plot known to millions. Does it not

contain a meaning far above the grade of the latest sensational release?

On the other hand, let us turn to the lowest stratum of screen art, the melodrama whose sole aim is to thrill for the moment. Here we have nothing significant beyond the mere fact that the product is a photoplay, having a design or plot and characterized by some realism of detail, because of which the shocks of surprise are more displosive. An example of the "thrillers" still seen too frequently in the programs is found in a photoplay released some years ago.* The plot dealt with an uprising among certain Arabian tribes which threatened the lives of white men and women sojourning in their neighborhood. The tribesmen, incited by a proverbial "movie" villain, capture the hero while he, accompanied by native guides, is engaged in a lion hunt. As he is about to be shot by one of the turbulent band, he is miraculously saved by a lariat, thrown from the adjacent brush, which encircles the upraised firearm and jerks it from the hand of the would-be executioner. Still another thrill of similar importance occurs when the heroine, after capture by the Arabs, is thrust into a foul hole in which wild lions are wont to sleep. One of these beasts appears as she lies trembling in a corner, whereupon she arises and TAMES it with caresses whose effectiveness would make a Gloria Swanson tear her hair! Later on, this lion, at the suggestion of his fair charmer, obligingly gobbles up the villain, though we could not but

*A modern example could as easily have been given, but this was selected because of its resemblance to the beginner's early ideas of a "thrilling action."

think that the result of his rash meal must for him have been tragic.

Formulas for Melodramas

One of the chief reasons for the insignificance of melodrama is the fact that very often it is written by formula, meaning some quick and easy rule of creation such as the triad. It is true that nearly all stories DO contain a triad of characters, but the machine-like regularity with which the triumvirate of the eternal triangle appears on the screen points to the ready-made play taken from the plot catalogues. And to cap it all, add the illogical "new twist" and the INSIGNIFICANCE is completed!

By way of illustration, consider the photoplay, "Beyond the Rocks," the story of the beautiful girl who marries an elderly man and, when he evinces an inclination to sit by the fireside, promptly falls in love with a seraphic "movie" youth. This is the eternal triangle rehashed for the one-million-and-first time by Elinor Glyn, who, true to type, gives us sex rot neurotically written. The eternal triangle is, by the way, one of the principal reasons why the "movie" industry has, during the past two years, felt the pinch of a playgoers' boycott. Nothing is more depressing than this strumming without surcease upon a single string of the film harp; and that is precisely what the captains of the celluloid industry have been doing for years and, probably, will continue to do, until the public has deserted the picture-houses to such a number that the producers shall have paused to read a few new plots.

Such formulas lead to "styles" in photodrama, ranging from the era of the pure young district attorney to the era of the sweet young wife afflicted with a hardboiled husband. The formula even intrudes itself into the pages of history, as all know who saw the photoplay, "Nero," a spectacle presenting historical facts from the viewpoint of the "lot," in which Rome is burned in miniature and hundreds of extras are kept busy in a vain effort to conceal the banality of the drama. Authenticity of backgrounds cannot tide over a weak story; and, usually, these historical subjects, wofully barren of dramatic possibilities, are warped from all semblance of historical fact by an admixture of the triad, the triangle and the "new twist" so-called.

The Situation of Convenience

The DEUS EX MACHINA of early drama played the role of convenience, for, when all was hopelessly ensnarled, the god of convenience descended and solved the riddle or cut the knot, relieving the situation into which the characters had been maneuvered. This supernatural intervention is now, especially in the "movies," replaced by coincidence and the situation of convenience, a situation by which some deadlock or obstacle is removed, either death or an inexplainable fortuity interceding to destroy the triad or to remove the barrier. We may observe in the screen drama entitled, "Her Gilded Cage," the story of the innocent Parisian maiden compelled by the needs of her bed-ridden sister to accept the position of dancer in a gilded cafe frequented by a visiting king. Of course, the young artist, her

lover from whom she parted because of her burden, is mistakenly led to believe her the mistress of the royal patron, and only when the sister miraculously develops the ability to walk is the misunderstanding cleared up. Here we have the "sick sister" used as a detail of convenience, for without her there could be no plot. This is an example of what old "General Hokum"* of the studios regards as "the kind of melodrama the people want."

THE OBLIGATORY SCENE

Another manner in which the photoplay often violates the precepts of significant, dramatic art lurks in the frequency with which so-called masterpieces of direction, trumpeted from the housetops of filmdom as "subtle studies of human nature," ignore the OBLIGATORY SCENE. The obligatory scene is that which is made essential by earlier events, so that the spectators are led to look for or anticipate a later scene between certain characters over a certain issue or conflict raised for solution. For example, in "The Song of Life," when the young novelist discovers the portrait of his dissatisfied wife upon the desk of the publisher, we are instinctively prepared because of earlier occurrences to see him demand an explanation of its possession and, when he fails to do so, we again look forward to a scene between himself and his wife, in which he shall demand of her the truth regarding this picture. When, in her presence, he remains silent, we feel that the playwright has neglected the scene obligatory, has cheated us of what we were led to expect; and,

*Apology to Harry Leon Wilson.

even when the husband shoots the publisher, his action has an air of artificiality because of the withholding of this scene we had looked forward to, the occurrence of which, under the circumstances, would have been lifelike and dramatic. The beginner cannot afford to neglect his scenes obligatory, and should search his material for oversights of this nature.

The Unhappy Ending

A charge often unjustly hurled at the photoplay is the prevalence of the "happy ending." There is, indeed, nothing intrinsically unreal about the happy ending, and only when commercialism appends it to some story whose material progresses immutably toward a serious or catastrophic termination, are we justified in pointing out its artificiality. For, if we refer these questions back to life, as we should do, we find that life's complications terminate, as a rule, in neutrality — neither so good nor so bad. Again, we find that many of life's episodes end happily, some even blissfully, and while these are, perhaps, not so numerous as those ending neutrally, unsatisfactorily or even unhappily, yet they are a legitimate part of art as drawn from life. The more frequent occurrence of unsatisfactory, unhappy or tragic fulfilments in life accounts, no doubt, for the desire in the breasts of all mankind to reach the happy ending, to attain the ideal which so often in life is denied to us; and, thus, in the dramatic and photodramatic arts we find the happy termination to be the rule and the unhappy one the "artistic exception" so-called.

The only rule which it seems advisable to give the beginner is to refer his material, his characters, back to life, and to be guided by the material as it progresses to its close. If the close be, dramatically, of a serious or unhappy nature, compromise in the form of a "happy ending" can only weaken the material, however much commercialism may dictate the concession. On the other hand, if the mimic affairs arrange themselves toward a happy conclusion there is, certainly, nothing to be gained by grafting a tragedy upon the final events. It is undeniable that the most of playgoers prefer the happy consummation; but recently there have been signs that the screen may, in future, exhibit the unhappy ending, when, logically, it is demanded by the material.

What the Public Wants

Much insidious propaganda has, of recent years, been put out from certain quarters to the effect that the public wants melodrama. The public, be it asserted, wants nothing of the sort, unless, as is often not the case, the melodrama be APPEALING.

Crude notions of what the public wants, or, rather, what the producers think it wants, have led to the "styles" in photoplay releases, each canny magnate of the celluloid imitating the output of his colleagues. For instance, take the feature adaptation "The Queen of the Moulin Rouge," a Latin Quarter dish served up to a waning patronage. Briefly, it may be yclept "Parisian junk." The notion that photoplay audiences want these highly spiced stories of

French moral standards is doomed to be expensively dissipated by a bored public.

The public, all the producers and oracles of filmdom to the contrary not invalidating, wants DRAMA, whether it be in the form of melodrama comedy-drama or tragedy. The public wants something with significance; and it is not wedded to any type of cinematic play. It will, however, continue to register its disapproval at the box-office until it is given what is does want.

Types of Plays and Actresses

Perhaps, it were not wise to close this chapter without a brief talk on the several kinds of photoplays and actresses. Since most of our popular screen favorites, male or female, are young people, still new to their art, the beginning author will do well to write for them only that kind of material which does not put a too heavy demand on their abilities. Recollect that there is only one Lillian Gish on the screen today; and actresses like Mae Marsh, or, perhaps, Anita Stewart, of long experience and capable of playing a variety of parts successfully, are not plentiful. The aspirant must study the stars upon the screen in order to arrive at accurate ideas of their respective capabilities. It is because of the youth of stellar players at present being featured by the producers that certain classes of plays are not desirable.

For example, tragedies calling for heavy acting; serious dramas demanding great histrionic skill; emotional plays involving complex character portrayals; all these are generally not wanted. On the other hand, comedy-drama is in constant

demand; melodrama, if not too heavy, is always desired; farce comedy has a steady but not large demand; all-star stories, if original and dramatic, find a sale. The beginner should merely bear in mind the acting talent of the screen when plotting a story; it is, unfortunately, not as high as might be desired.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the significance of the last photoplay you saw at the theatre? Any?
2. Is not the scene in the detailed synopsis between Arthur and George, after Arthur finds Anne's pin, obligatory? Might it be omitted without impairing the effect?
3. Can you find an obligatory scene in the continuity?
4. Do you know what the public wants? What do you want in photoplays? Why?
5. Do you write by formula, such as the triad? Do you consult books on the 36 dramatic situations or do you pore over the plot catalogues for ideas? Do you consider your product to be significant?
6. Do you depend on situations of convenience or upon coincidence to help your plot over a barrier?

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER XXI

THE MECHANISM WHICH CONTROLS; CAMERACRAFT*.

In this chapter we will take up the various devices by which the camera — the mechanism which eventually controls all photoplay writing — accomplishes its many and illusory effects, the tricks and artifices of photography that are at once the delight and despair of the beginner. Of course, only those commonly used can be treated; for the synoptist as a specialist in his line need not be an expert cinematographer. A familiarity with the devices presently to be described is, nevertheless, desirable; and the aspirant will find some new ones not hitherto included in books on photoplay writing. He will find also that new terms are often invented to designate old effects long in use. These mystify the beginner and cause him to buy some book or "course" in order to learn the new names; but after all he finds he has the same mechanism with which to deal — the camera.

To begin with we had best understand the meaning of "reel," the standard film length by which photoplays are measured, and "frame," the photographic or picture unit of the film.

*I am indebted to W. H. Smith of the Fox Film Co. for certain information supplied in this chapter.

(1) THE REEL AND THE FRAME. A reel of film is one thousand feet in length, although in many photoplays the final reel may not be a full thousand feet. Thus, a six-reel feature might measure only 5676 feet in length, the play not requiring the completion of the sixth reel. However, such a photoplay is called a six-reel feature. Photoplays are now produced in the number of feet necessary to give them adequate dramatic development, and not according to the old cut-and-dried formula of so many reels per play regardless. The standard program length is five reels, and dramas which require a greater number of reels are called "special features" or "super features."

To each foot of film there are sixteen (16) FRAMES or pictures. Each of these frames is a complete photograph as seen on the screen in enlarged form; but, as the film is merely a sensitive strip composed of a succession of frames or pictures, the rapid passage of which through a projection machine gives the optical illusion of MOTION (due to a peculiarity of the eye), a frame is simply a UNIT of the film, there being sixteen units to each foot of a reel. One second of time is ordinarily required to turn through one foot of film or sixteen frames. Thus such a speed is called a "speed of sixteen" or normal speed. However, speeds of fourteen or eighteen, or others, slower or faster than normal, may be used, depending on the subject-matter being "shot." Because of this possible variation in speeds, a reel of film may run from 14* to 18 or 19 minutes, the normal

*In some cases, especially in comedy, the time may be much shorter than this; features of 12 reels have been shown in TWO HOURS time in so-called first-class theatres.

time being about 16 minutes. Usually a reel of film is said to run for about sixteen minutes; but the operator in projecting the film upon the screen may not follow the speed at which it was "shot," but may increase a speed of sixteen to, say, twenty, making the action jumpy and indistinct — even comic. In projection, the operator is supposed to follow closely the taking speed, if anything slowing it down a trifle. Therefore, rapid projection is a practice to be severely condemned when it occurs in any first-class theatre.

The proper timing of a continuity, in order to tell how many minutes it will consume, and, thus, how many reels of film will be required, is to act through, or read, the scenes in the dramatic tempo suited to the emotions or business, noting by the watch the time required for any given scene. About seven to fifteen seconds may be allowed for each leader or subtitle, according to the number of words used and the time requisite for a spectator to read the leader ONCE. Thus, if a continuity contains, say, 240 scenes and 60 leaders, it may require five to six reels, depending on the length of the scenes. Short scenes or "flashes" consume but a few seconds each and many of them may be gotten into a single reel. As a rule, from 20 to 35 scenes of dramatic material make one reel; from 35 to 60 scenes of comedy material may be gotten into a reel.

(2) SCENES. In the chapter on scene-writing, examples of scenes have been given. It now remains to mention some not previously explained.

The "pan" is the panoram previously defined.

The "angle shot" is a scene taken from an

angle, as where the camera is mounted above and to one side of a set being "shot."

The "flash" is a very brief scene shown but a few seconds. This is usually employed when cutting back or "flashing back," or in comedy.

The Semi-Close-Up is a scene closer than normal but not so close as the Close-Up.

The long "shot" or long-distance "shot" is a scene taken from farther than normal distance.

All of these "shots" are illustrated in the continuity of Chapter 23, where they should be studied by the beginner. Specifying them in a script is a matter of common-sense; and anyone who possesses the imagination to visualize clearly what effect he wants and can express himself in clear and direct English, can make himself understood. He should, if possible, use the technical terms; but these are being changed time and again by zealous cameramen eager to outdo rivals. There is also, as was stated at the beginning of this chapter, a tendency to employ new terms to puzzle the aspirant, in the hope that he will buy the new book or take the new course of instruction to satisfy his curiosity.

(3) THE DOUBLE LENS. We shall now take up the devices familiarity with which is deemed essential to the equipment of the trained scenarist. These will be treated as fully as seems necessary for the purpose.

Perhaps the most important improvement in the camera to date is the invention of the double or shifting lens. By this device the close-up may be taken without stopping the camera. The machine is equipped with two lenses of different sizes and an instantaneous shifting or interchanging

device. Say that a scene is being shot at normal distance with the two-inch lens and a close-up is desired. The operator merely presses a spring and a larger lens is instantaneously substituted for the two-inch, magnifying the details and producing the effect of moving the camera closer to the actors. In writing continuity for this camera each close-up is a part of the scene in which it occurs, as the camera is not stopped and no new scene is necessitated. However, unless the author knows he is writing for the double-lens, he should write every close-up in his script as a separate scene.

(4) THE FOLLOW. If the camera is mounted on a vehicle, such as an automobile, that follows behind another one in which certain business is going on, the effect is called the "follow." The first vehicle appears as if we were riding just behind it; and the device is often seen in comedy. If the follow is not interrupted by the cut-back, it constitutes one continuous scene. Where broken up by intruding other scenes it may be divided into many brief parts or "flashes"

(5) THE TRUCK-UP. As a rule, the camera must be stopped and lifted when changing it from normal to a semi-close-up, or from normal to semi-long-distance. But, if it be mounted on a truck or on a movable platform which can be rolled nearer to or farther from the actors, we get a very necessary effect for certain kinds of work. For example, it may be desirable to show first the better part of a large room so as to get in the detail. But at this distance the action is indistinct, so, we roll the camera closer to the set. This is called the truck-up and is a part of the

scene in which it is used, since it does not necessitate a stoppage of the mechanism. If it is desired to have the camera brought closer, we write "truck-up;" if farther away, we say "truck back." The continuity may be examined for examples of the truck-up. It should not be called for in situations where quick and smooth movement is impossible, such as on rugged mountain eminences or other out of the way places.

(6) THE MASK. The mask is an artifice by which part of the frame or film is masked off, only the action seen through the opening being registered. The familiar key-hole is an example. Here we see the outlines of a key-hole, with certain action going on through the opening. The effect is as if we were peeping through a key-hole at persons on the other side of the door. The mask is a separate scene and may be specified in the script by writing "Mask" in capitals after the scene number and then describing the opening desired, such as key-hole, binoculars, the star, and others. By use of the "mat" in the printing of the positives many unusual effects of a similar nature may be obtained, but, of course, more expensively.

(7) THE VISION WITHIN THE FRAME or the "straight vision" is a mask. One corner or portion of the frame, selected where the effect will be most appropriate, is masked off and the action is then "shot" on the exposed part. Now the camera is stopped, the film turned back the desired length, the exposed portion of the frame masked off and the vision "shot" in the previously masked section. The vision is a part of the scene in which it occurs. The "fade" vision will also be explained

later. The vision within the frame and the split-screen (to be explained) both necessitate leaving the film in the camera until the action can be completed by filling in the masked area. The "straight vision" should not be called for if a "fade" will do equally as well (see last page of continuity).

(8) THE SPLIT-SCREEN is also a mask. In this case there is a double or treble division of the frame, usually double. This is sometimes called the "half-mask," since the screen is divided into two parts. First one side is masked off and action photographed in the exposed side. Then the process is reversed, the other side being exposed and action "shot" for it. Both sides are thus filled in and the contrasting action and settings may be very desirable. For instance, a man may be shown in jail on one side of the frame while at the same time his starving wife and baby are shown on the other. The split-screen is a single scene and may be called for by writing "split-screen" in capitals after the scene number and then describing both interiors or sets desired and the action in each. The split-screen should be sparingly used and only when simultaneous action will be dramatically effective. (See continuity.)

(9) THE FADE. The fade is made by gradually cutting off the light from the lens, so that a scene appears to "fade out." If the process is reversed, we have a "fade in." If we have two fades together it is called a dissolve, or a "lap dissolve," meaning that two fades overlap or run together. In other words, a dissolve is a double fade. Fades are used to accentuate emotions. The dissolve

is often used to introduce the "fade vision." (See continuity.)

(10) THE FADE VISION. When a scene fades out and the next scene fades in, showing us the thoughts, dreams or retrospect of a character, we have a fade vision. These should always be as brief as possible. The long retrospect is taboo because of reasons already given in this book. The fade vision is often preferred to the masked vision. Fade visions are separate scenes and may be called for by writing "fade out" at the end of one scene and "fade into" at the beginning of the next. (See continuity.)

(11) THE IRIS OR VIGNETTE. The iris is the effect of a gradually decreasing circle, which closes down to a mere dot, sometimes combining with the "fade." The lens is encircled by a diaphragm with a decreasing area; the dot circle may be centered on some object, such as a weapon or an article of clothing, or the face of a character, and is used where a close-up is not considered desirable. It gives the object encircled a certain emphasis or importance. Or, the dot may begin a scene, growing gradually larger and larger until the circle embraces the frame. The iris is generally used to terminate some strand of the story completed for the moment and to designate the beginning of a new sequence of scenes. It is very effective for calling attention to objects on which the dot circle rests. If we wish to circle down to a dot we write "iris down" or "iris down to knife on table." If we want to reverse, we write "iris up," or "iris up from ring on finger." Irises begin or terminate scenes in the same manner as "fades." For preparation or fore-

tokening objects they are very effective. The aspirant should study the iris or vignette on the screen. (See continuity.)

(12) THE CUT-BACK is a common device for referring back to another strand of the action going on in some other location or place. We have already seen its uses. The student should study it in the continuity and on the screen. It is the greatest intensifier of suspense known to the photoplay.

(13) DOUBLE EXPOSURE AND DOUBLE PRINTING. A mask as we have seen is a double exposure device, since it necessitates two exposures of the same strip of film. The MAT is the metal or black celluloid mask used on the APERTURE PLATE of the camera in double exposures. A mat is a stencil also used in double printing by which effects similar to those of double exposure are attained. Double exposure is generally used instead of double printing. A MIRROR is sometimes used in making the "vision" by double exposure, certain characters acting behind the camera, but being photographed from the mirror.

(14) INSERTS. As has already been shown elsewhere inserts are a part of the scenes in which they occur. They are printed or written upon suitable material and are then photographed and introduced into the film at the points desired. They do not constitute separate scenes, since they may be photographed at the desired moments while a scene is being "shot." Inserts have as their function the conveyance of certain facts or information to the spectators; and their value is measured by the indirection, naturalness and comprehensiveness with which they perform their

office. In the chapter on scenario writing we will find advice upon the wording or writing of inserts. For the present, it may be added that they should be brief, for every word requires that about a foot of film be used or about one second of time be allowed. A twenty-word insert demands about fifteen seconds of time for its perusal by the audience.

(15) LEADERS OR SUBTITLES. The writing of leaders or subtitles will be treated in later chapters. Here we have to discuss other phases of the subject. All leaders or captions are parts of the scene in which they occur (when spoken), or are inserted between scenes (if formal). They are photographed from printed or written material, as are inserts, and are introduced where wanted in the film. As to brevity, the same remarks apply to them as to inserts. Not more than twenty words should be used in any leader, spoken or formal, if it is possible to express the information to be given in that number of words. The greater the number of words in a leader the longer the time requisite for its perusal by the spectators. Somewhat less than a second is allowed for each word of a subtitle.

It seems desirable here to give the functions of leaders. In any art which is youthful and progressive, which has vitality, rules made today will be discarded tomorrow. Therefore, no hard and fast rules as to the use of leaders will be attempted. That was left to the old-school text-book writers of a day that has passed. Grouping the purposes of the leader in broad and general terms, we may say that leaders:

(a) Bridge a lapse of time in a narrative not otherwise bridged.

(b) Stand as a philosophical overture at the beginning of a play, as in "Orphans of the Storm," by presenting some bit of philosophy of life pertinent to the story.

(c) Act as formal explanations of facts necessary to be conveyed to the audience, either at the beginning or during the action of the piece.

(d) Cut into a scene in the form of the speech or dialogue of a character, conveying some information or stressing some obstacle or accelerator essential to the dramatic effect.

(e) Enliven a scene by the wit, humor or satire contained in their wording, as in comedies; or introduce some satirical, ironical or philosophical truth or statement before some scene in a drama.

No hard and fast rules need be given as to the use of leaders. We have seen their general functions. It now remains to say that no leader, spoken or formal, should be employed where PICTORIAL effects will as well serve the purpose; and no leader should be employed in such a way as to make the scenes that follow an anti-climax, by conveying information in advance that should be disclosed by the action of the scenes themselves. With these general data we may now pass on to the subject of the chapter that follows.

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER XXII

PRACTICABILITY, EXPENSE AND COMMERCIALISM*

Commercialism is regarded as the bane of all arts, but commercialism is a safety-valve, a regulator, which, while it may set a low standard, prevents much distorted and fantastic work from reaching the screen in the name of photodrama. Just think what would happen if commercialism were suddenly to be removed from the industry! Think of the invasion of incompetents, the "futurists" or "free versifiers" of the screen! The public would not get what it wants, but what these new arbiters adjudged it should have. There is a serious doubt that the art would, on the whole, be any the better off. For there are as many inferior or misshapen mentalities engaged in trying to write photoplays as there are engaged in their production.

All this is, in no sense, a defense of commercialism PER SE; for what has been said of commercialism is said solely in relation to standards. Since, when we consider that it sets a mark, a standard, we cannot deny it an advantage. On the other hand, it has grave drawbacks in the case of the photoplay. The photoplay author is compelled

*Several books treat of photoplay ART, but often are erroneous in certain aesthetic premises.

to have his work passed on by the producers themselves. There are no EDITORS in the true meaning; Mr. Woodenhead, who invests the money for production, is the final thumbs-up or thumbs-down in the fate of any submitted script. Sometimes a stock-holding star may have a voice; often not. The trouble with this system is that the producers are usually not authors or actors; they know the art of buying or selling but not the art of authorship. They do NOT know what the public wants; they do not know how to evaluate a really original or powerful story. They themselves are governed by economic principles.

The remedy for this situation rests in the hands of the public, the photoplay-goers. They can, if they will, demand that higher standards be inaugurated in the choice and direction of photoplays; by their refusal to pay money into the box-office until this is done they can control the art and industry. They have it in their power to change the entire complexion of the photoplay industry within a period of a year, simply by declining longer to be the "goat" of the economists who at present hold sway. Much good has already been done by the stringency brought on in the past two years; but much more remains to be done.

Expense in Production

However, in this chapter, the intention is to discuss certain phases of practicability or expense in the production of the screen story. We may, therefore, pass on to that matter, leaving the question of commercialism in the hands where it belongs.

No matter how perfect the art of the photoplay might be, no matter how well regulated might be the balance between art and industry, the question of expense still would loom large, as it does in all the affairs of life. Every production must of necessity pay for itself and realize at least a moderate profit upon the money invested, for this is the law of all business. To the author this matter comes home in the aspect of DETAIL; he must know what can and cannot be done by the camera; he must know what is or is not too costly to justify its usage. This is a matter of importance to the synoptist. The synoptist in writing his story has the control of detail and special effects in his own hands. If his story is big enough to justify special effects, an army of extras, the expense will not matter; if not, expense may be the chief reason for rejection. Nearly anything is today possible in the way of setting, location or effects, but only the meritorious story will bear extra expense; the beginner should trim his sails accordingly!

COSTUME PLAYS

Some of the finest works of literature deal with events that would make "costume stories" so-called, if produced on the screen. Such works can be produced at the outlay demanded, or often they can be adapted or transplanted to modern times. For example, "A Tale of Two Cities" was, some years ago, adapted to Kentucky and may serve as a "horrible example" of adaptation. As a rule, however, the producers taboo the "costume" story, and the beginner has small chance to dispose of such material. To be sure, Mr.

Griffith did not hesitate to reproduce the background of the French Revolution, when practically every other producer in America would have turned down the same story had it been offered him; but this, of course, proves nothing except Mr. Griffith's superior artistic taste and intelligence. The aspiring author cannot hope to find numerous producers of this caliber — there is only one.

So, we may say that the story which demands elaborate and, inevitably, expensive costuming, is best avoided by the beginner. Often an idea may be transplanted in the author's mind, brought from remote times to the present, or at least, to days of fairly modern dress. If the idea is of such nature as will not admit of this change, then, by all means, file it away and turn the creative faculties in another direction.

Similar to the general "costume" play is the war play. Nearly everyone is tired of war stories for the present. Moreover, they involve costuming and a large staff of extras. If a story have a wartime background, this should be rigidly subordinated to the civilian side of the plot. As a rule, however, do not write war stories. Perhaps, after a few years, they may regain some popularity.

Lighting Effects

A few years ago many effects of lighting were produced only at considerable outlay. It is good news to the author that today he may call for nearly anything of this kind. If, for example, he desires a fireside effect, a street-scene at night, moonlight, auto lights, lanterns, twilight, or numerous other similar effects, such detail in his story

is no drawback to production. A certain amount of contrast of this kind relieves the pictorial impressions of a sameness often inexcusable.

THE MINIATURE

Another aid to authors is the model or miniature by which effects formerly impossible or expensive beyond reason are now attainable. Storms and losses at sea, train wrecks, volcanoes, and the like, are now practicable. They are made possible by the miniature, a miniature likeness of the vessel to be sunk, or a model of the building to be burned, or the like. These models are carefully prepared with regard for detail and, when photographed, give the effect desired because of the concealment of artificiality possible to the lens. The camera CAN and DOES lie, and lies artistically, when properly manipulated. If, for example, the producer desires to "burn Rome," but does not, of course, desire to go to the expense of building life-size sets or camouflaged "fronts" to be consigned to the torch, he has a miniature constructed, which, when photographed, gives the impression of looking down upon the burning city from an adjacent hilltop or pinnacle. By this means many effects formerly impossible, such as a belching volcano, are now in the repertory of the melodramatist for the screen.

Not all such effects, by any means, are camouflaged; for still an occasional example of the "real thing" is screened for the delectation of the playgoer.* Recently, a genuine train-wreck was

*In "The Iron Trail," a bridge-span was built life-size and collapsed with realistic effect, including close-ups. Similar constructions are occasionally made for some desired effect necessary to a story.

staged, two old locomotives being purchased and wrecked for the camera in a head-on collision. As a rule, miniatures would be used; but some of the realistic detail is bound to be lacking in a model. Careful scrutiny of the screen will reveal the model as distinct from the original. One of the tests is that close-ups of the burning buildings or wrecked trains are not given; and, if used, are close-ups of some other happening or some other scene. The quick eye can detect the subterfuge; but for the masses it is magic.

Outdoor Scenes

As we have seen, exteriors are preferable on the score of expense to interiors; but there are certain classes of locations or exteriors that are more expensive than others. For example, certain kinds of mountain scenes, such as waterfalls, natural caverns, and the like, are not always easily obtained. No expense is spared on good stories with big ideas, but the insignificant photoplay demands no concessions. In the summer season snow scenes may be had by the use of salt spilled around to imitate drifts. This effect is even used on locations (exteriors) upon demand. Now and then, when some big historical subject or story known to a large public calls for authentic backgrounds, companies are entrained for distant locations or embark for foreign countries to get the proper atmosphere and backgrounds. It may be the ruins in Italy or the tomb of the pharaohs — it will be had, if the story is one to justify the expense. The beginner had better, as a rule, confine himself to North America and the locations near at hand. As for sets, nearly any kind of

interior is accessible on short notice. Hard and fast rules cannot be given; but the aspirant should exercise a little judgment.

Double Print and Exposure

By the processes of double printing and double exposure, technical details of which are not possible in the scope of this book, the photoplay gives its admirers many wonderful, even marvellous things in photography. We may have ghosts, spirits, fairies, goblins, trick effects of statues coming to life, and innumerable other marvels. It is a great pity that not more stories for children, making use of these devices, are produced. It is also deplorable that they are not oftener used in the production of idealistic pictures for grown-ups, in which fancy and the delights of unreality take part. Escape for an hour from the details of reality is a yearning in many healthy minds. The screen offers this escape more pleasantly and convincingly than any other art known to man. At present, although such imaginative effects may be used now and again, the aspirant will find difficulty in selling fantasy or stories of fancy. They are expensive to produce, and the public has not made its demands effective by the boycott.

Exercises

1. Select from the screen a photoplay which, in your opinion, employs the miniature.
2. Select an example that illustrates the various lighting effects, or some of them.

3. From a current photoplay point out all the leaders, inserts, and spoken or cut-in leaders and state the nature and purpose of each as used.

4. From a current photoplay point out such devices as masks, fades, irises, visions, split-screens (if any), and the like (as given in Chapter 21), and discuss their effectiveness.

5. Could the same effects have been attained in any other way?

6. How far do you think commercialism should be carried in the production of photodramas?

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER XXIII

A SPECIMEN SCENARIO, AND HOW SCENARIOS ARE WRITTEN

The word scenario has a special meaning in the terminology of the stage dramatist. To him it means a plan of a play by scenes, the dramatic scene-sequence of the proposed story from which the dialogue is missing. In view of this usage, the word has a peculiar resemblance to the cinematic term continuity; for a continuity is, after all, but a scene-development of the story, a SCENARIO in the technical sense. The two words may, therefore, be used synonymously; and in the present chapter, in taking up certain phases of scenario construction not previously gone into, we shall find first the one and then the other applied to cinematic narrative. The word scenario is, however, commonly used to designate the complete manuscript of a photoplay, including title-page, cast, brief synopsis, scene-plot and, finally, the continuity; while, on the other hand, continuity is a name restricted to the cinematic narrative (scene-sequence). The aspirant has no need to split hairs over such words but may, ordinarily, use either one.

A scenario or continuity is all business and detail. The story is told in action or pantomime,

with all suitable details of setting and all properties,* together with such subtitular explanations and inserts, as may be essential to the preconceived effects to be wrought. The author does not obtrude his own personality or authorial viewpoint, save where he may occasionally give directions for the use of cinematic devices or similar instructions; and the entire story unreels itself, or appears to unreel itself, without the apparent aid of the author. In this respect the scenario does not resemble the story or novel, nor does it parallel the detailed synopsis; for in any of these the author may, if occasion invites, intrude his personality into the narrative, either by shifting the viewpoint momentarily (an undesirable effect), or by so describing the action or characters that we feel his presence. Continuity writing is, therefore, IMPERSONAL composition. It is the INDIRECT or dramatic method of unfolding a narrative by the emotional movements and facial indications of the actors.

The value of a knowledge of continuity writing to the synoptist, even though he may never use it professionally, is not to be underrated. For, as it has been the aim of the preceding chapters to show, continuity underlies the synoptical story, in that the synopsis is intended for ultimate transmutation into a scenario to be acted before the camera. The beginner should strive to master the constructive elements of scene-writing; to apply the principles of dramatic effect as readily to constructing a continuity as a synopsis; to

*A property is any object used by the actors in the acting of a photoplay, such as furniture, utensils, implements, weapons, articles of clothing and the like.

specify camera devices correctly and wherever needed; to express himself fluently in the pictorial medium, for the pictorial is the future tense in which all photoplays are expressed.

Literary Style Unnecessary but Helpful

In the composition of a scenario, "literary style" is unnecessary; but in all writing a ready command of English is helpful. The description of a pantomimic action requires nothing beyond a simple, straightforward style (but not on that account trite or jejune); and the professional continuity writers are not AUTHORS in the true sense, for they have no "literary" merits — need none. On the other hand, a good vocabulary and a broad acquaintance with forms of expression are very beneficial, as a scenario often demands descriptions that are above the fifth-reader. In such cases, the person with a single-track vocabulary is under a handicap.

Advice to the beginner upon the matter of style may be found in Chapter 24. There is no doubt that the study of English, not with the intention of cultivating STYLE, although that is very desirable, but with the idea of broadening ones command of language, is highly advisable. Nothing so quickly reveals paucity of ideas, a want of experience and education, as a dearth of words with which to express ones ideas. Often this revelation matters little, but again it prejudices a reader or editor ere he has read a hundred words of the proffered manuscript. Readers do not seek style in photoplay manuscripts, but look for ideas or situations clearly and interestingly set forth.

THE POINT OF ATTACK

The beginning of the continuity, the point at which the pantomime takes up the narrative, is called the **POINT OF ATTACK**. With precisely what scene to begin the story, exactly how to present the initial facts, is a question harassing to most beginning scenarists. Since the aspirant is presumed to be training for synopsis writing and not for a berth as continuity writer, the matter will be taken up in a general way, the broad principles of effect being given rather than various studio tricks. Tricks grow stale and are replaced by others; principles remain unshaken by upheavals in the studio.

The principles by which the point of attack may be determined are briefly outlined as follows:

(a) Every photoplay begins of necessity in the **CRITICAL CONDITIONS**; for, if it begin further on, then somewhere in the narrative there must be a retrospect or visioning back to include initial facts and conditions omitted at the beginning.

(b) If the story is preceded by conditions or events that form a prologue, the action should begin with these conditions precedent, in order that reminiscence or visioning be avoided.

(c) The opening scene may be preceded by a leader or subtitle, which is in the nature of a philosophical overture or is a formal explanation of certain facts the audience must know.

(d) The opening scene may be one of character introduction and may be preceded by a leader introducing the character.

(e) The opening scene may be one of plot, an important event, although this is not usually the

case; it may be tense, surprising, carrying the audience directly into the heart of the dramatic texture.

Upon the first of these principles, i. e., that the point of attack begins in the critical conditions, there is no need to elaborate. It stands to reason that a story must begin somewhere in its critical conditions; and, if there is a prologue, it may be regarded as a part of the critical conditions, for, when the excitant is introduced, the antecedent facts became important to the ensuing action. The student may find any number of examples to prove this statement in the current releases. He is advised to study the methods of attacking the story illustrated in the photoplays now being shown at the playhouse. If he will analyze them closely, he will find that all begin in the critical conditions, with a few exceptions presently to be mentioned.

In "Orphans of the Storm" the story is preceded by a leader, a philosophical overture and formal explanation in one, which establishes the period and atmosphere and gives the narrative a philosophical tint; the action then takes up the prologue, at the critical moment when the commoner husband of a de Vaudrey is slain by her kinsmen at the very door of her bedroom. This is an example of the opening which begins in the critical conditions, making the point of attack a scene quite tense and suspensive, which at once draws the spectator into the issues subsequently to be unfolded.

Very often the first scene introduces a character or several characters who are to play important parts in the coming events. This is the episodic

method of attack by which the opening scenes deal with minor incidents or character episodes. Examples of this method are seen on the screen now and again. If the minor event is not one of character, it usually strikes a TONE that dominates the action, or it may hint at the atmosphere. For instance, in the continuity at the end of this chapter, the opening scene, preceded by an explanatory leader, gives the tone of the story, or the wartime atmosphere. We are introduced immediately to the state of war declared by the President; the scene before the bulletin boards brings vividly to mind the excitement and unsettled conditions which always immediately follow a declaration of war. This scene is tactical and is indirectly of importance.

The opening scene may be related to an important plot event. For instance, many of the detective or mystery stories developed in the undramatic or "narrative" form are opened with a strategic or plot scene. We see, for illustration, several characters conversing mysteriously in a library. Before we have time to determine their relationships, the scene is darkened, shadowy forms dimly outlined are seen struggling to and fro. The lights are restored; on the floor lies one of the characters — slain by the hand of one of the others for motives we cannot fathom. Here the method is to plunge us immediately into the plot; but it is, for all its momentary tension, undramatic, because we know that later on the suspense shall be broken by a retrospect which explains the motives leading to the homicide.

The general point of attack is to select, for the commencement of the story, those incidents and

characters which shall most quickly introduce the onlookers to the conflict or issues at stake and rear the structure of suspense. The first scene is chosen as the one most quickly leading into this fulfilment, and offers a wide opportunity for originality, deftness of touch and dramatic force.

THE DEVELOPMENT

All that has been said of the point of attack might as well have been said of the DEVELOPMENT. Once a beginning has been made, the story is developed according to the principles of continuity and dramatic construction which have been discussed in preceding chapters. But in the development of the action, bit by bit or strand by strand, questions similar to those arising over the point of attack present themselves. When one strand of narrative is momentarily terminated, the beginner often wonders how best to take up the next, or where to begin it. His answer will be found grounded in the same broad generalizations as apply to the point of attack. A careful study of the continuity at the end of this chapter and of current photoplays will afford suggestions to any thoughtful aspirant.

In "The Bonded Woman," for example, the story carries the principals from their home to a little island far remote. The progression from strand to stand was rapid and choiceful, leaving aside all unessential details and incidents. In the development of any scenario economy of detail is essential, unless the story is so slight of plot that padding must be resorted to.

In general, the treatment of stories in continuity form is dramatic; but there are occasional examples of "narrative" or STORY development. Writing in The Writer's Monthly, a professional continuity author says:

"The trained screen-writer knows that there are as many methods of treatment for continuities for the screen as there are for the novel and the play. Some subjects demand the dramatic style accorded most stage-plays, while others are more effectively developed by the narrative style of treatment, which might be fatal to the stage-play when transferred to the screen."

This erroneous notion that prevails among staff authors is a potent cause of the low standards still observed in a large part of the photoplay output. When a story is, in its original form, UNDRAMATIC, it is an open question whether or not a "narrative" continuity is any more conducive to an artistic impression than would be a dramatic version (the word "artistic" having only a studio value). In truth, many observers believe that, in the future, material for the screen will be selected entirely for its dramatic possibilities. For the beginner, the following advice culled from The Photodramatist should be heeded:

"It is true that 'narrative' pictures are occasionally seen on the screen, but the percentage of these is very small compared with the dramatic type of picture. This means that the amateur has far less chance of putting one over than he has with a dramatic work. The narrative picture is nearly altogether dependent on the remarkable characterization and the fine acting brought out by the director. It will be noticed that

nearly all these stories are from the pens of the MASTERS OF FICTION (emphasis the author's). The amateur cannot paint the same picture and make his characters live like the well known author; his narrative stories are too colorless, and the characters are cold and unconvincing."

The author of this book has always regarded the narrative photoplay as an anomaly. Since the parentage of the photodrama is undeniably dramatic, pantomime being an early form of drama, the so-called "narrative" photoplay is a purely pictorial product, told in STORY form by DRAMATIC MIMICRY for reproduction on a FILM — an anomalous, unesthetic and bastard product, unrecognized by its own father!

From the outset and throughout the development of the scenario, the writer is under the necessity of arranging the material of each and every scene in accordance with the criteria in the chapter on scene-writing. Moreover, camera-craft is of constant importance to the development. As the trained scenarist works on a story he has visualized or visualizes each and every effect to be wrought in the continuity (subject to change) and decides the camera device best suited or most appropriate to bring about the desired effect. He has a reason for every choice of material or means, and his reasons go back to the plot, characters and episodes. He uses an iris, for example, at one point and a fade elsewhere, using neither one haphazardly but with an eye to a certain impression to be made in a certain way. He works up to a climax, or point of chief crisis and suspense, which comes either at the end or near the end of the action. This is referred

to in the argot of the studios as the "kick." It used to be called the "punch."

The Number of Scenes

Patently, no rules can be laid down upon the number of scenes necessary to develop any story. Two different writers might vary in the number of scenes used to develop the same story. It all depends on the effects attempted by the scenarist as well as on the material of the story. One novel, for example, can be adapted for the camera in, say, 180 scenes; another may require 300 scenes or more. In neither case is there any padding noticeable. Many factors, such as the number of characters to be introduced, their relationships, antecedent conditions, and the like, govern the length of a photoplay. The expert author is always as brief as his effects will permit; he always introduces his principal characters as early as possible; he gets his point of attack as near to his EXCITANT as he can; but withal his story may run a reel or two beyond the length of others equally as dramatic. The safe rule is to do the story justice and trust to director and cutter to produce something more than a botch, something from which the obligatory scenes have not been removed.

The Ending

The termination of a story often bothers the novice; he does not know when to quit. Perhaps the true solution of the matter varies somewhat with the material of every photoplay; but we may classify all endings as DEFINITE or INDETERMINATE. The definite culmination carries the events to a solution that we feel is permanent or

lasting. Death is final; but marriage, regeneration, and the like, are usually regarded as definite, not because in life they terminate anything, but because in a play they end the ACTION. The indeterminate ending, on the other hand, leaves the desired outcome or upshot to the inference or imagination of the audience.

Let us have examples. "Foolish Wives," or "False Fronts," or "Evidence," or "The Woman Who Walked Alone" are illustrations of the definite termination of the photodramatic action. To the contrary, "Orphans of the Storm" ends rather indefinitely, because we do not know the future status of Pierre and Louise; only a foreshadowing is given. Again, "Fortune's Mask," a rather trite melodrama, ends indeterminately, because we do not know how the husband is to manage about that red wig. This play ends, as one might say, by courtesy of the spectators. In the continuity at the end of this chapter, the story logically closes with the exposure of Duane and the reunion of the lovers with Mrs. Cabot's consent. To show their return from the war overseas and the marriage would be an anti-climax — something that the audience already feels certain of. An indeterminate ending is used, merely foreshadowed by the final scene of the transport putting out to sea.

As a rule, definite terminations are desired. The scenarist should carry his events to that point where they resolve the issues to a satisfactory culmination. Unnecessary details, in the nature of an anti-climax, may be left to the imagination of the onlookers; and, if necessary, the indeterminate ending may be used.

The New Twist

If possible, a plot should be so thought out and developed that it terminates with some novelty, freshness or originality — often spoken of as "the new twist." This is best attained by allowing the characters to work out a new termination of their difficulties. An illogical, implausible "twist" for the mere sake of originality so-called is to be avoided, although it is employed so often in the current programs that the photoplay-goers are being driven to other amusements. This "new twist" is the result of all the incompetent "authors" (word used advisedly), all the so-called "scenario dramatists," the directors and producers flocking to the "movies" after failure in other arts. These morons view the photoplay through the eyes of those "who know what the public wants." In order to cover up their outstanding incompetency, to disguise their want of creative ability, they have, in self-defense, taken to the "new twist." The day is imminent when these men and women are to be STARVED OUT by a disgusted public! Let us hope that day arrives on the wings of the radio!

If a story is well-constructed, dramatic, a somewhat illogical "twist" is not unpardonable. Many such scripts are bought from outsiders, beginners as well as experienced free-lances. They are usually taken by the companies which specialize in melodrama or the more sensational releases. However, the aspirant had best beware of "new twists" merely as a novelty at the end of an otherwise trite offering. Do not sacrifice verisimilitude for the sake of a mere startling termination to the story.

Changes Made During Production

In the production of a photodrama changes are often quite necessary, even where the continuity is the work of a studio writer, as is now practically always the case. While the filming of the action is taking place, the continuity man, director and producer are on the lookout for weak effects which can be advantageously changed. Things which look effective on paper often do not live up to expectations in the filming, for a given idea may be hard to convey to the director and actors. Often, a new and better way to achieve the same effect is found while the photoplay is being "shot." In this event, a change is demanded. Again, when the completed negative goes to the cutting-room, many portions of the total footage are eliminated, in order that the resulting film may be more compact and effective. This matter is not important to the synoptist, but should be understood in connection with scenario writing.

Another Hint on Scenario Composition

In the composition of a scenario, there are many little matters of great importance. For example, in the writing of business, familiarity with continuity will show that many ideas can be expressed in pantomime which are not, at first thought, apparently actable. Again, in describing emotions, the author should, as far as possible, describe COLLATERAL expressions of the face, gesticulations, and the like. Thus, instead of writing, "She feels horrified at the disclosure," it is more graphic, photodramatic, to write, "She stares in wide-eyed horror, presses hands to

face, sinks into chair overcome by the disclosure." However, for the sake of reducing the length of a manuscript, the more general and compact style of writing is often used. The matter depends on an understanding between the writer and the director as to how to designate the business. Some directors like generalities and others want to be guided by specific descriptions.

Impossible business — impossible because of facts already disclosed to the student — is about as follows: "She feels horrified at the disclosure and thinks of the happy days of yore, resolving on the spot to make no more investments!" How could it be done in pantomime? That is not the PICTORIAL method, as anyone can see.

Titles, Their Choice and Purpose

The selection of titles by an author is very important, for a good title on the billboards aids in "selling" the photoplay to the public. As a rule, titles should:

(a) Express the theme of the story, such as Forbidden Fruit.

(b) Foreshadow the main events, issues or obstacles, such as The Nigger, or What Every Woman Knows.

(c) Suggest the moral problem, as Foolish Wives, or The Blindness of Virtue.

(d) Mention a chief character, as Clarence, or The Count of Monte Cristo.

(e) In other ways have significance or suggestion with reference to the plot.

These are by no means all the classifications which might be made, but they suffice to make the functions of a good title at least partly clear.

Example of a title having no meaning with reference to the story — Hail the Woman. (Why hail her?)

As to the length of titles, they should be as brief as would be consistent with their functions. A single word looks good on the billboards, such as Humoresque; two words also, such as Dream Street or Broken Blossoms; three words are perhaps most often chosen, as The Gray Dawn; four words not so often, as A Daughter of Luxury; five- and six-word titles are about the limit in length, there being only rare exceptions. A good example — To Have and To Hold. Long titles are not so effective on the billboards; the eye does not so easily take them in, and the meaning does not so soon dawn on the mind. The aspirant should choose short and forceful titles, making them as picturesque or picturable as possible. Consider such titles as, The Man Who Saw Tomorrow (rather long), or Manslaughter, or Blood and Sand, or While Satan Sleeps.

Leaders and Inserts — How to Word

We have already seen the functions of leaders and inserts. It is here important to discuss their composition. While the perfect photoplay is, theoretically, leaderless, yet, as we have seen, only the simple, banal plot lends itself to such externalization. Most screen stories require leaders and inserts; and, where necessary, they should be well-written and lend TONE to the story. Atmosphere, literary finish, wit, humor and philosophy are some of the many attributes loaned to a photoplay by its leaders and inserts.

As a rule, all inserts should be written in the

style which in life they would naturally have. A newspaper story should be written in the news style with typical headlines; so, also, the telegram or letter should be couched in the terse, elliptic or the loose, personal styles usually seen. Other examples suggest themselves.

Leaders or subtitles should be brief, pithy, cogent. If a character is speaking, the spoken subtitle should be worded according to his emotions, education and characteristics. Polished speech in the mouth of a rural simpleton would be comic or implausible. Flat commonplaces in the mouth of a highly excited, emotionally overwrought woman would be inappropriate to the situation. Good judgment, in these and similar instances, and some dramatic taste in the choice of words are demanded.

As to the NUMBER of leaders or inserts in a photoplay, few rules can or should be given. The number should be governed by the material, its complexities and individual problems. However, it may safely be laid down as a rule that not more than TWO spoken leaders should occur in any one scene; and that leaders preferably should not be more numerous than ONE for every FOUR OR FIVE scenes in the scenario. When they are more numerous than this, the writer is infringing on the methods of the dialogue drama, the short-story or novel, and departing from the means of pictorial drama. For example, in "The Song of Life," there were too many spoken leaders in several scenes; they deprived the subsequent action of its suspense and surprise. In the same story a character refers to his PAST in dialogue, instead of by pictorial means (and dialogue too),

such as fade or vision, thus borrowing the thunder of the stage play but violating the principles of the pictorial drama. From the photodramatic point of view, this may be called undramatic; for, had the events precedent been so arranged, a brief pictorial reference or reminiscence could easily have been employed in preference to the spoken leader.

Leaders and inserts are usually written by the continuity writer subject to changes after the story is filmed; but often, especially in adaptations, the professional title-writer is employed. This person makes a specialty of writing subtitles for screen plays; he can change the whole significance of a story by writing a new set of leaders and inserts. If he possesses talent, the result may be advantageous; if, as is often the case, he is a person of limited taste and education, he may detract from the best action ever filmed.

Leaders and Inserts in the Continuity

Examination of the continuity at the end of this chapter will show that the story has a total of 155 scenes. Of formal leaders it has fifteen; of spoken leaders, twenty-eight; of inserts, nine. Several of the inserts are flashed the second time, but in no case more than twice for any one insert. This story, therefore, illustrates economy of literal or subtitular devices, as well as sub-pictorial devices or inserts. It is, therefore, well developed and carefully thought out, else such would not be the count.

PLAYWRITING ASSIGNMENTS (ADVANCED)

1. From the synopsis, "Moths and Candles" write a complete and finished continuity, with cast, scene-plot and brief synopsis, producing the best work you are capable of.

2. From a short-story of your choice, or from a novel, develop a synopsis and from that a continuity, sparing no pains to produce good work. Prepare a complete Ms.

3. Write scenes illustrating the use of the various devices not so frequently used, such as the truck-up, split-screen, and the like. If desirable, use these devices in your continuity work.

4. Transplant a story of your choice laid in a period that would make it a "costume" play to modern times and settings.

5. Memorize from the screen, by witnessing the photoplay two or three times, the plot and scene-sequence of any story you select; then from memory write a continuity of the story, supplying business and detail as fully as possible. If you forget any portions of the cinematic narrative, supply material from your own ideas so as to fill out the story.

NOTICE

The continuity reproduced in this chapter is a specimen of effective scenario construction and graphic plot development as exhibited in an author's script. Wherever in the chapters reference is made to THE CONTINUITY, it adverts to this scenario, unless otherwise specified.

Readers may not use the material of this scenario, nor the material of any other part of this book, in their own photoplays.

THE AUTHOR

SOME PEOPLE'S HONOR

(Drama of Feature Length)

By H. TEMPLE DEAMON

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THE CHARACTERS

HELEN CABOT, who rebels at the emptiness of Society.

MRS. RODNEY CABOT, her mother, a Social Leader.

DUANE WARRINGTON, who finds Society an occupation.

DR. ALAN HOWARD, who builds his practice among the City's Social Peers.

AMOS QUIGG, Mrs. Cabot's lawyer.

OTHERS

Detectives.
Newspaper reporter.
Two "dope victims."
Soldiers.
Doctor's assistant.
Club members.
Servants.
Chauffeurs.
Nurses, patients, and the like.
Police officers.
Clerks, draft officials, and so on.
Spectators.
Registrants.
Guests, and the like.

SYNOPSIS

MRS. RODNEY CABOT, when she finds that her daughter, HELEN, is losing interest in matters social, consults DR. ALAN HOWARD, young nerve specialist, for in her position of wealthy widow and social peer society is her all.

Attracted by Helen, the young doctor falls in love with her and she with him. At the Cabot home, Helen's fiance, DUANE WARRINGTON, her mother's choice, becomes violently jealous of the doctor.

Duane indulges a talent for intrigue so effectively that the physician is charged by a newspaper with pandering to drug addicts, but cannot prove the source of the attack.

Helen, reading the charge, finds her idol shattered. The doctor is affronted by Duane who calls him a man without honor. His lucrative practice among the wealthy falls away and he is forced to rebuild his fortunes.

War is declared with Germany and ten million men register, among them Duane. Shuddering, at the thought of khaki, Duane begs Helen to marry him, but she breaks their engagement on the spot, as she cannot marry a slacker.

To avoid her mother's anger, Helen leaves her home and becomes a nurse, in which capacity she is safe and hidden for the time being. Her mother puts detectives in motion to find her and publishes an announcement of her engagement to Duane. At the hospital she meets Dr. Howard and her love for him returns when she learns of his dope cures.

Duane, called for examination and learning that Dr. Howard is the medical draft officer before

whom he is to appear, thinks to bribe him for an exemption. The doctor holds the bribe money and tells Duane to call later for an answer, thinking that he can prove to Helen, whose engagement he has seen announced, that Duane is no fit person for her husband. This he does by tactics which prove his own honor and the undoing of Duane, the coward and would-be criminal. All will end happily when the young people return from service overseas.

SCENE PLOT

EXTERIORS (55).

Exterior of Newspaper Office, 1, 2.
Veranda wealthy home, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 62, 64, 99.
Exterior of City Mansion, 11, 71, 73.
Terrace of Lawn at Wealthy Home, 16, 34, 58, 59, 60, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69.
Fountain, 35.
Exterior of Handsome Club, 36, 40.
A Street, 37, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 89, 97, 142.
Street (Slums) 38, 39.
Street Near Terrace, 61, 98.
Exterior of Registration Booth, 48, 49.
Walk near Veranda, 63.
Bulletin Boards, 74.
Exterior of Hospital, 109, 124, 126.
Lobby of Office Building, 110.
Exterior of Building, 127, 144, 146.
Harbor, 155.

INTERIORS (100).

Bedroom, 12, 13, 14, 70, 79, 80, 88, 90.
Ante-Room, physician's office, 15, 17, 18, 42, 43, 44, 78, 128, 130, 131, 132, 137, 138, 139, 141, 148.

Interior physician's private office, 16, 19, 20, 21, 45, 46, 47, 77, 84, 117, 118, 119, 120, 129, 133, 134, 135, 136, 143, 145, 149, 151, 153, 154.
Entrance to Ballroom, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.
Room Contiguous to Ballroom, 27, 29.
A Doorway, 28.
Club Rooms, 30, 31, 32, 33, 75, 76.
Club, Writing Desks, 41.
Interior of Registration Poll, 50.
Interior of Newspaper Office, 57.
Hallway and Staircase, 72.
Drawing Room, 81, 83, 85, 87, 101.
Stairway, 82, 86, 91, 100.
A Door, 92, 111.
Interior of Apartments, 93, 95, 116.
Corner of Room, Telephone Stand, 94, 96.
Interior of Exemption Board, 102.
Interior of Hospital Ward, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 121, 122, 123.
Ante-Room of Law Offices, 112.
An[illegible]Office, 113, 115.
Detective Agency, 114.
Corridor of Hospital, 125.
Police Station, 140.
Interior of Closet in Doctor's Office, 147, 150, 152.

SOME PEOPLE'S HONOR

CONTINUITY

LEADER:* THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT DECLARES A STATE OF WAR WITH GERMANY.

*Also called subtitles or captions.
Spoken subtitle sometimes called Cut-In leaders or dialogue subtitles.

Scene 1. EXTERIOR OF CITY NEWSPAPER OFFICE.

Bulletin boards. Excited crowds. Edition just off of press. Crowds scramble to buy papers. A man in the foreground secures one — reads with several others looking over his shoulder at headlines —

Scene 2. CLOSE-UP.

Screaming headline of paper says — "Wilson Declares State of War Exists" — Reader smiles happily — likes news — gesticulates enthusiastically — Fade out.

LEADER: HELEN CABOT, WHO SEES SOCIETY AS IT IS.

Scene 3. VERANDA OF CABOT HOME.

Several guests taking tea at tables in foreground. Mrs. Cabot in foreground at table with several women. They converse with the languid dignity of the social votary. Helen enters scene from far end of veranda — comes slowly forward — expresses disgust — halts —

Scene 4. CLOSE-UP.

Helen signifies her disgust — makes little rebellious motion of distaste, as if monotony were on her nerves — smothers yawn—

Scene 5. BACK TO 3.

Mrs. Cabot rises — surprised at Helen — at loss to understand her conduct — apologizes to guests for it — Guests nod understandingly with that ready sophistry encountered in society —

LEADER: HER MOTHER, MRS. RODNEY CABOT, WEALTHY WIDOW, WHO SEES SOCIETY THROUGH THE EYES OF CASTE.

Scene 6. CLOSE-UP.
Mrs. Cabot comes to Helen's side — gazes at her with puzzled eyes — quizzical — rallies Helen — Helen tries to smile indifferently — can't — tired — Cut —

Scene 7. BACK TO 5.
Helen indifferently joins guests — Mrs. Cabot ponders —

LEADER: DUANE WARRINGTON, HELEN'S FIANCE, TO WHOM SOCIETY IS BOTH AN OCCUPATION AND PASTIME.

Scene 8. SAME AS 7 (SEMI-CLOSE-UP).
Duane enters scene, Greets guests urbanely — Suave with Helen, who is bored. Mrs. Cabot greets him effusively — almost affectionately; she is evidently taken with his manner and air, from prideful way in which she looks at him. Helen moves off as if in anguish — wants to be elsewhere. Mrs. Cabot calls Duane's attention to Helen's manner — motions toward her — he registers he will remember it — smiles —

Scene 9. CLOSE-UP.
Helen biting lips to repress explosion of emotion or "nerves" — Duane cynically amused in background — Cut.

Scene 10. SAME AS 5.
Helen unable to stand it longer — moves away with a gesture of desperation —

Duane follows — Mrs. Cabot makes gesture of resignation — gives it up as a puzzle to be solved — resumes place among guests who comment adroitly among themselves with smirks and grimaces — Cut.

LEADER: DR. ALAN HOWARD, NERVE SPECIALIST, WHO BUILDS HIS PRACTICE AMONG THE CITY'S SOCIAL PEERS.

Scene 11. EXTERIOR OF IMPOSING MANSION — DISTANT SHOT (But move camera closer immediately — TRUCK-UP) Car evidently for hire at curb. Dr. Howard, medicine case in hand, emerges from mansion and descends steps — enters car with quick direction to driver —Cut —

Scene 12. HELEN'S BEDROOM (NIGHT). Helen in negligee seated before open window — street light visible beyond — she can't sleep — bed with pillow unruffled — Enter Mrs. Cabot in loose gown — amazed to find Helen up — Helen indifferent — Mrs. Cabot consults wrist watch — aggrieved — says:

SPOKEN LEADER: "I CAN'T UNDERSTAND THIS EXTRAORDINARY LOSS OF INTEREST! THINK OF OUR SOCIAL POSITION! WE SHALL CONSULT A PHYSICIAN TOMORROW.

BACK TO SCENE. Mrs. Cabot collapses into a chair in foreground — as if matter is beyond her — Cut.

Scene 13. SEMI-CLOSE-UP.
Helen smiles wearily — winks back tears — registers she will try to sleep — presses head as if it pained her —

LEADER: WHEN THE MORROW CAME.

Scene 14. ANTE-ROOM OF DOCTOR'S OFFICE (rather nicely furnished). An assistant discovered making entries in a book. Enter Dr. Howard. Assistant hands him papers, mail, etc. Doctor looks over mail casually — chats with assistant — who shows him entries in book (don't flash) — He is well pleased — doing well — Gives assistant brief instructions — passes into inner office through glass door on which is painted the word "Private." Assistant goes back to work — Cut.

Scene 15. PORTION OF TERRACE OF CABOT HOME — STREET BELOW — LAWN. Car drives to curb below — Mrs. Cabot and Helen emerge from house and go toward car — Chauffeur jumps down and opens door — Cut.

Scene 16. INTERIOR OF DOCTOR'S PRIVATE OFFICE (Nicely furnished.) Doctor reading newspaper hurriedly — article attracts his eye — he is interested — (flash).

INSERT (On Screen) News Item with large headlines — says:
"Enforcement of Harrison Anti-Narcotic Act Brings Misery to Dopers" — sub-head says, "It is believed many physicians will

be indicted by Grand Jury just convened by Federal Judge."

BACK TO SCENE. Doctor registers that the article meets with his approval — pleased — enter Assistant who hands him card — he puts paper quickly aside — rises —

INSERT (On Screen) Card — Mrs. Rodney Cabot.

BACK TO SCENE. Doctor signifies he will see lady at once — straightens office jacket — Assistant exit. Doctor follows —

Scene 17. ANTE ROOM AS IN 14.
Mrs. Cabot and Helen seated waiting — Helen indifferent — Assistant comes from inner office — tells ladies Doctor will see them at once — retires — Enter Doctor — bows — Mrs. Cabot registers she wishes to consult him — He expresses pleasure — invites them into inner office — Mrs. Cabot goes in followed by Helen — Helen interested in Doctor — gives him a demure glance as she passes him —

Scene 18. CLOSE-UP.
Helen half smiling at Doctor, who cannot conceal his admiration for her beauty —

Scene 19. PRIVATE OFFICE — SAME AS 16 BUT SEMI-CLOSE-UP.

Doctor seating ladies — Doctor sits facing them and listens attentively to Mrs. Cabot's explanations. Helen is piquant — half

amused — smiles and mouthes by turns — Doctor, who watches her admiringly, feels her pulse — makes her show whites of eyes — takes a thermometer from pocket of jacket — gives it to her — She places it in her mouth gingerly as if it were the first time she had ever seen one. Doctor chats with Mrs. Cabot. Helen takes thermometer covertly from mouth — sees that Doctor is not watching — gives him an arch glance — shakes thermometer violently — looks at it with naughty smile — shakes it again — returns it to mouth. Doctor takes it from her — looks at it —surprised — Cut—

Scene 20. CLOSE-UP.

Doctor looking at thermometer with amazement. Feels her pulse again — sees her smile — begins to understand — registers he is "wise" —

Scene 21. SAME AS 19.

Doctor smiling at Helen — who returns it — but not too openly — He turns to Mrs. Cabot — says:

SPOKEN LEADER: "THESE NERVOUS DISORDERS ARE BAFFLING — I SHALL HAVE TO OBSERVE YOUR DAUGHTER IN HER NATURAL SURROUNDINGS."

BACK TO SCENE. Mrs. Cabot graciously assents — Helen secretly delighted — exchanges quick glance with Doctor. Both are now securely enmeshed in mutual admiration — Mrs. Cabot rises — says:

SPOKEN LEADER: "I SHALL BE PLEASED TO HAVE YOU CALL TOMORROW EVENING." BACK TO SCENE. Helen demurely triumphant — ladies are ready to go — Mrs. Cabot is blind to the by-play under her nose — Doctor clever and aware of it — Helen gives him a promising smile — Cut.

LEADER: OBSERVATION.

Scene 22. ENTRANCE TO BALLROOM (NEAR VIEW).
Dancing going on inside — Helen at door to ballroom — chatting with fiance, Duane, but looks about impatiently — evidently awaiting someone — hardly hears Duane's pleasantries. He is somewhat puzzled — Mrs. Cabot enters scene with Doctor Howard — Helen greets Doctor demurely — secretly delighted — Doctor is very cordial — Mrs. Cabot moves away — Helen is so taken with Doctor's admiring glances that she forgets to introduce Duane. Duane is furious — jealous. He coughs meaningly — they do not notice him — he repeats it more violently —

Scene 23. CLOSE-UP.
Duane coughing — Helen and Doctor turn — Helen thinks it a great joke — Doctor surprised —

Scene 24. BACK TO 22.
Helen takes Doctor's arm and draws him toward Duane — says:

SPOKEN LEADER: "ALLOW ME TO PRESENT YOU TO MR. DUANE WARRINGTON, MY FIANCE."

BACK TO SCENE. Duane plainly will never like the Doctor — Bows stiffly — cold. Helen watches Doctor's face closely — Doctor retains equinimity —

Scene 25. CLOSE-UP.

Doctor sets mouth in hard line to keep from showing his chagrin — but cannot hide the blow at learning of Helen's engagement to Duane —

Scene 26. BACK TO 24.

Doctor is very pleasant — Helen smiles to herself — unobserved gives Doctor little half humorous — half tender glance — Duane asks her to dance — but she signifies she will dance with Doctor, who leads her onto floor — They dance. Duane makes a violent gesture of jealous rage — clutches at collar as if it were too tight — glares after Doctor — Makes motion as if resolved to settle this matter at once — Goes off —

Scene 27. A ROOM OPENING ON BALL-ROOM.

(Door at rear giving on ballroom through which dancers may be seen. Davenport at one side partly turned away from door.) Dance finished. Doctor leads Helen to seat. Both oblivious to all but each other. Noticeable.

Scene 28. SAME ROOM FROM BALL-ROOM DOOR.

Helen and Doctor seen chatting animatedly — Helen leans slightly against him — just noticeable. Duane enters scene with Mrs.

Cabot — he is aggrieved and agitated — points out couple to Mrs. Cabot — cannot understand the matter — she reassures him — hands him card —(flash card).

INSERT (On Screen) Card —
Dr. Alan Howard
Specialist in mental and nervous disorders.

BACK TO SCENE. Duane somewhat reassured by card, but still not entirely happy. Mrs. Cabot smiles and leaves him with a pat on shoulder. He continues to watch couple — suspicious — jealousy developing an acute stage — suddenly moves toward them —

Scene 29. AS IN 27 BUT SEMI-CLOSE-UP. Helen telling Doctor her troubles — he is very much interested — but seems to be more so in her face than her conversation — she says with vehemence:

SPOKEN LEADER: "I HATE THE FRIVOLITY AND EMPTINESS OF THIS LIFE — AS FOR DUANE, HE IS ONLY A POOR BUTTERFLY."

BACK TO SCENE. Doctor understands. Takes her hand — they exchange warm smile — Duane approaches slowly — sees by-play — jealous — grimaces — interrupts them and reminds Helen with affectation of pleasantry that she owes him a dance. She is plainly vexed — gives Doctor look of helplessness — rises — he rises — Helen registers she will dance — he bows. Duane quickly and with a black look leads her away —

LEADER: POOR BUTTERFLY!

Scene 30. CLUB ROOMS — LUXURIOUS AND IMPRESSIVE.

Fellows smoking — drinking — card playing. All faultlessly dressed. Effects of wine seen on some faces in foreground — Duane seated apart reading — refuses all invitations to join nearby gamblers — reads (flash).

INSERT (On Screen) Same news article as in scene 16.

BACK TO SCENE. Duane registers he has a sudden idea that is promising — Cut.

Scene 31. CLOSE-UP.
Duane smiling mendaciously — draws card from pocket and examines it meaningly —

Scene 32. CLOSE-UP.
Hand holding card. Doctor's professional card as in former scene.

Scene 33. BACK TO 30.
Duane has idea — pleased with it — puts card in pocket — calls for wine — joins card players at nearby table — Cut.

Scene 34. TERRACE (Similar to 15).
Doctor and Helen strolling — Helen seems very happy — Doctor is plainly in love —

Scene 35. FOUNTAIN.
They approach — Helen happy — Doctor takes her by shoulders — about to draw her to him — she eludes embrace — says seriously but not angrily:

SPOKEN LEADER: "NOT FOR THE PRESENT — REMEMBER I HAVE A FIANCE."

BACK TO SCENE. Doctor registers he remembers it well enough — disappointed — she is playful — alluring — brings smile back to his face —

LEADER: A TALENT FOR INTRIGUE.

Scene 36. EXTERIOR OF CLUB.

Luxurious limousine at curb — liveried chauffeur — Duane emerges from club — gives direction to chauffeur who opens door for him — enters car — Cut.

Scene 37. STREET.

Car wending its way through the traffic of the business section —

Scene 38. STREET IN SLUMS—SQUALID.

Same car draws up to curb. Stops. Duane beckons someone in doorway of miserable home — a bent old woman — ragged and hideous — appears. Followed by skinny, shaggy girl (about sixteen) — wild eyes — evidently both are victims of some habit. Duane beckons them close to car — they approach timidly —

Scene 39. CLOSE-UP.

Door of car from sidewalk. Duane leaning out. Dopers talk feverishly — woman says:

SPOKEN LEADER: "WE CAN'T GET NONE SINCE THE BULLS STARTED ARTER THE DOCS."

BACK TO SCENE. Duane registers he will help them out — winks significantly —

they are slow to believe, shy — he hands card to woman — she reads it by holding it close to her eyes —

INSERT (On Screen) Card — Doctor Howard's professional card as formerly —
BACK TO SCENE. Woman overjoyed when he touches her significantly on shoulder and points to card — she thanks him — he hands her money — she signifies she will use it —Cut.

Scene 40. EXTERIOR OF CLUB (SAME AS IN 36).
Limousine comes into scene and stops before Club. Chauffeur alights and opens door for Duane who enters Club — Cut.

Scene 41. WRITING DESKS IN CORNER OF CLUB ROOM.
Duane seats himself at a desk apart from others and writes on note-paper, looking around cautiously to see that he is not observed — finishes (flash).

INSERT (On Screen) Note written on blank note-paper — says —
"This will announce that I am sending you a patient — an unfortunate who needs a drug to keep her and her child alive. Oblige me by an act of charity for which you shall be rewarded.
As ever, HELEN."

BACK TO SCENE. Duane, pleased, seals and addresses note—smiles triumphantly—

Scene 42. SAME AS 17 (Ante Room).
Doctor reading a note which he has just

opened — other mail lying on table nearby — surprised at note — looks at envelope held in his hand — looks at Assistant to see that he is unobserved —

Scene 43. CLOSE-UP.
Evidently note written by Duane (don't flash) —

Scene 44. BACK TO 42.
Doctor crumples note in hand — registers his distaste — will not comply with request — ponders — unfolds note — puts it in pocket — Assistant goes to door and admits woman and girl of scene 38 and 39. Woman leers at Doctor — Assistant draws away from woman — Doctor thrusts hand in pocket convulsively and pulls out note — crushes it in hand — beckons them into private office, opening door for them — Cut.

Scene 45. INTERIOR OF PRIVATE OFFICE (AS IN 19).
Woman and girl stare about with idiotic eyes. Doctor decides not to aid them — waves them away — cannot do anything for them — woman cringes — says:

SPOKEN LEADER: "JUST FOR HER SAKE, DOC — SHE'S BEEN A TAKIN' IT SINCE SHE WAS SO HIGH."
BACK TO SCENE. Woman points to daughter — makes supplicating gesture — Doctor sympathetic — looks at girl and shakes head hopelessly — takes out note — unfolds it — decides to help them —

because of note —puts note in pocket — writes prescription — gives it to woman and waves away money offered him —

Scene 46. CLOSE-UP.
Hand holding paper, which has word "prescription" on it in large type —

Scene 47. BACK TO 45.
Doctor sickened by sight of them — bids them go — pushes them gently from office — Cut —

LEADER. TEN MILLION AMERICANS REGISTER FOR SERVICE AGAINST AUTOCRACY.

Scene 48. EXTERIOR OF REGISTRATION BOOTH.
Sign over door says, "Men of Precinct 43 Register Here" — Crowd about entrance — Limousine draws up at curb. Duane alights — moves toward entrance — several draw aside to let him pass —

Scene 49. CLOSE-UP.
Duane wedging through crowd — distaste written on face — dislikes to rub elbows with common men —

Scene 50. INTERIOR REGISTRATION BOOTH (CLOSE VIEW).
Tables lined across rear — clerks seated behind them writing — rough looking fellows answering questions as clerks write cards — one rises from chair — Duane distastefully takes place — first brushing off chair with his handkerchief — several rough fellows point him out and laugh among themselves —

Scene 51. STREET (PERSPECTIVE).
Soldiers approaching on march — crowds — flags — band —

Scene 52. AT CURB (CLOSE VIEW).
Soldiers passing — Car pulls up at curb — Duane, Helen and Mrs. Cabot in car — watch soldiers — Duane unpleasantly affected by sight —

Scene 53. CLOSE-UP OF CAR.
Helen applauds soldiers admiringly — Mrs. Cabot is shocked — reproves Helen — Duane cynical — Helen surprised and hurt — sees Duane's smile — turns on him, says spiritedly:

SPOKEN LEADER: "AREN'T YOU WILLING TO DO YOUR BIT?"

BACK TO SCENE. Duane embarrassed by her heat — then angry — signifies it is a small matter — but cannot conceal a rather craven distaste for it — Mrs. Cabot gazes at him with approval. Helen, with growing contempt, turns coldly away — watches soldiers — Cut.

Scene 54. SAME AS 52.
Woman of scene 47 enters scene. Duane sees her as his eye wanders about — sees that ladies are not watching him — beckons woman — He questions her and she nods "yes" — moves off at his sign — A Newspaper Reporter enters scene — camera over shoulder by strap — making notes in book — Duane calls him — he goes to car.

Scene 55. CLOSE-UP (AS IN 53).
Duane talking hurriedly and covertly to reporter — who listens and is impressed. Duane points off in direction taken by woman — newspaper man with quick and meaning nod moves off after her — Cut.

Scene 56. STREET (ELSEWHERE).
Newspaper man overtakes woman — approaches her politely — questions her eagerly — she is frightened but answers, gesticulating vaguely — newsman writes in notebook — Cut.

Scene 57. INTERIOR OF A NEWSPAPER OFFICE.
Several workers in shirtsleeves at desks, some wear eyeshades. Edition just off press — workers are looking it over — Enter reporter of scene 56. Grabs copy of paper — scans it quickly — finds article on front page — laughs — proud — others gather around and congratulate him — (flash) —

INSERT (On Screen) News article with scare-heads —
First heading states: "Fashionable Doctor Panders to Dope Fiends;" sub-head says: Dr. Alan Howard, well-known among city's wealthy set, caught writing prescriptions for victims of drug habit. Big scoop for Times staff."

BACK TO SCENE. All register it is good stuff — Cut.

Scene 58. TERRACE (AS IN 34) (HOUSE IN NEAR DISTANCE).
Helen seated in a lawn-chair — other chairs nearby — Mrs. Cabot approaches excitedly holding newspaper — thrusts it into Helen's hands — she reads —

Scene 59. CLOSE-UP.
Scare-head of dope article previously flashed. Helen astounded — Mrs. Cabot's finger points to Doctor's name — Helen can't believe it — horrified —

Scene 60. BACK TO 58.
Mrs. Cabot very much wrought up — aggrieved — denounces Doctor vigorously — says:

SPOKEN LEADER: "A MAN OF NO HONOR!"
BACK TO SCENE. Helen silent — stares ahead as if her life had suddenly lost its charm — Duane comes down terrace — joins them — looks satisfied with himself — at peace with the world — inquires cause of Helen's tragic face — Mrs. Cabot shows him paper — makes aristocratic grimace of scorn — Duane affects regret — hypocritical — Helen is angry at his manner — All move toward house — Helen moving ahead — Cut.

Scene 61. STREET BELOW (Panoram if necessary).
Car drives into scene and stops at curb. Doctor alights — very blithe — it is evident he has not seen paper — mounts steps of terrace —

Scene 62. VERANDA — AS IN 3.
Mrs. Cabot seated talking to Duane — Helen cannot but think of something — bites lip emotionally —

Scene 63. WALK AT VERANDA STEPS.
Doctor enters scene — mounts veranda steps —

Scene 64. SAME AS 62.
Helen rises hastily as Doctor enters scene — Greets him hurriedly and with half-averted face — To his surprise draws him hurriedly away from Mrs. Cabot and Duane before they can address him — catches up paper from chair as she does so —

Scene 65. SAME AS 34.
Helen pulling Doctor along — he is puzzled by her manner and action — she shows him newspaper (don't flash) — He reads — he is amazed — horrified — angry — his expression bodes ill for someone —

Scene 66. CLOSE-UP.
Doctor gazes at paper — then off with a dawning look of what it may mean to him — hard blow —

Scene 67. BACK TO 65.
Doctor turns to Helen — takes note from pocket and hands her — she examines it — (flash) —

INSERT (On Screen) Note written by Duane and signed "Helen" as in former scenes — BACK TO SCENE. Doctor sees she is puzzled — asks if note is hers — she indicates "no" — cannot understand it — he

Scene 74. NEAR BULLETIN BOARDS.
Surging crowd — excitement — one board has large heading which says: "Men called in first draft." Man in foreground cheers — crowd takes it up — Cut.

Scene 75. CLUB ROOMS (SIMILAR TO 30).
Several fellows in khaki being congratulated by others in civilian dress. Duane in foreground does not take part in scene — someone calls attention to him — several look and laugh scornfully — one makes motion of contempt — an effeminate gesture — all laugh. Fellows in khaki look at him pityingly —

Scene 76. CLOSE-UP.
Duane embarrassed by remarks he overhears — but cowardly and does not resent them — self-pity shows in his face — almost in tears — hangs head — Fade out.

Scene 77. PRIVATE OFFICE (AS IN 45).
Doctor lost in thought — rather sad — rises wearily from chair — passes slowly into outer room —

Scene 78. ANTE-ROOM (AS IN 44) (Somewhat Closer View).
Assistant sits reading — yawns — Enter Doctor — takes book from table — opens it — pages blank — assistant registers there are no "calls" — no business — Doctor puts down book — puts hand on assistant's shoulder — registers he "cannot go on" — assistant understands — sorry — gets hat and coat from rack — comes back to Doctor,

who searches his pockets for enough money to pay him off — shakes hand of assistant — who quickly leaves office to hide his sorrow — Doctor tries to smile — drops head — Cut.

Scene 79. BEDROOM AS IN 70.
Dressing table in foreground — Helen seated at it receiving the administrations of her maid — Helen dismisses maid rather petulantly — maid exits. Helen stares at self in glass — sad — can't help but think — bites lip —

Scene 80. CLOSE-UP.
Helen looking at self in mirror — tries to smile — but cannot and a tear steals down cheek —

Scene 81. DRAWING ROOM IN CABOT HOME.
Mrs. Cabot rallying Duane who, with evening dress and boutonniere, seems rather depressed — they talk —

Scene 82. STAIRWAY.
Helen comes down stairs — slowly — trying to be natural — cannot be the same —

Scene 83. SAME AS 81.
Helen enters drawing room. Duane and Mrs. Cabot come forward — Duane glad to see her. Helen rather indifferent — Mrs. Cabot leaves them — Duane leads Helen toward divan — she is trying to be polite — they are seated — he talks earnestly — fearfully —

Scene 84. SAME AS 77.
Doctor opening a letter Postman has just handed him — Postman exits — Official document (flash).

INSERT (On Screen) Part of page — says: "You have been appointed medical examiner of District Exemption Board No. 21." Etc.
BACK TO SCENE. Doctor registers his willingness — makes gesture of assent — glances about — signifies it will be all the same — no business — nothing to do — drops head on hands — Cut.

Scene 85. SAME AS IN 83 (SEMI-CLOSE-UP).
Duane takes a card from pocket — hands to Helen — she takes it indifferently — glances at it — shows a sudden interest (flash card) —

INSERT (On Screen) Card — notification to Duane to present himself for medical examination to Exemption Board No. 21 to Doctor Alan Howard.
BACK TO SCENE. Helen hands card to him — asks him question — evidently — "when are you to be examined?" — he evades question — catches her hand quickly — evidently pressing his suit — begging her to marry him — tries to take her in his arms — she repulses him fiercely and springs angrily to feet — says:

SPOKEN LEADER: "I SHALL NOT MARRY YOU — YOU ARE TRYING TO DODGE THE DRAFT!"

BACK TO SCENE. Duane pleads wildly falls on knees before her — takes her hand — Helen furiously snatches it away — stamps foot — takes ring off finger and hands him — says:

SPOKEN LEADER. "WE ARE NO LONGER ENGAGED."

BACK TO SCENE. Duane cannot believe it — rises — begs her to reconsider. She refuses. He falls on knees before her — pleading wildly. Helen with motion of contempt sweeps by him and out of scene—

Scene 86. STAIRWAY (AS IN 82).

Helen ascending stairs — Mrs. Cabot enters scene — sees Helen — amazed — goes hurriedly toward drawing room —

Scene 87. SAME AS 85 — SEMI-CLOSE-UP.

Duane brushing his trousers with handkerchief — straightens tie — stunned expression — enter Mrs. Cabot who inquires cause of his agitation — he makes helpless gesture — they seat themselves — he signifies his hopes are blasted — talks quickly with hurried gestures — Mrs. Cabot's sympathy grows as she listens — even angry — he hangs head and she pats him reassuringly on the shoulder — Cut.

Scene 88. SAME AS 79 (BEDROOM).

Helen in negligee seated in large chair — seems very much depressed — enter Mrs. Cabot — angry — demands explanation — Helen has none — Mrs. Cabot haughty —

Helen rises — equally haughty — Mrs. Cabot says — well-bred threat:

SPOKEN LEADER: "YOUR FATHER'S WILL LEAVES HIS FORTUNE TO YOU AT MY DEATH, PROVIDED YOU OBEY ME. I WISH YOU TO MARRY DUANE."

BACK TO SCENE. Helen registers sorrow that she must refuse — makes regretful gesture — Mrs. Cabot waves her regret aside — indicates she expects her to change her ideas on the subject — sweeps from room — Helen sinks into chair — weeps — then regains her control — makes decision — goes to desk in background — seats self and writes (flash) —

INSERT (On Screen) Note —

Dear Mother: I am leaving home to make my own life. You need not hunt for me. I shall be safe but hidden in this great city. I cannot marry a slacker and coward.

HELEN.

BACK TO SCENE. Finishes note — seals it — rises — Cut.

Scene 89. STREET NEAR CURB. NIGHT. STREET LIGHTS, ETC.

Duane with merry fellows. Duane drunk — staggers. Fellows separate at corner — Duane reels down street alone — Cut.

Scene 90. SAME AS 88.

Helen dressed for street — wears hat — — has bag packed — looks about room sadly — chokes back sob — passes out —

Scene 91. STAIRWAY (SEMI-CLOSE-UP).
Helen softly and cautiously descending — stops and listens — passes on —

Scene 92. CLOSE-UP OF HALLWAY AT DOOR TO STREET.
Helen pauses at door — listens — softly opens it — takes last look — then passes out, shutting door —

Scene 93. INTERIOR OF DUANE'S APARTMENTS.
Luxurious — rather gaudy — bad taste. Duane in dressing gown — holds towel about head — looks "all in" — seats self — thinks — rises suddenly — answers 'phone on table nearby — can't hear well at first — then his expression shows growing surprise — Cut.

Scene 94. CLOSE-UP TABLE 'PHONE NEAR WALL.
Mrs. Cabot talking at 'phone — reading from note in hand — (don't flash) — evidently Helen's note — Mrs. Cabot excited — bursts into tears — goes on trying to talk — Cut —

Scene 95. BACK TO 93.
Duane gets shock — drops receiver — recovers it — has lost call — shouts into 'phone — hangs up quickly — calls to someone — valet enters scene — Duane will dress at once — gesticulates excitedly —

Scene 96. SAME AS 94.
Mrs. Cabot talking — evidently cut off —

can't get answer — hangs up — sits looking at note — registers as near grief as possible for her — stifles emotion — rises — will act — Cut.

Scene 97. (FLASH (STREET).
Duane's car passing along street — Duane looks out from car —

Scene 98. CURB (AS IN 61).
Duane alights from car and hastens somewhat groggily up steps — puts hand to head as if it ached —

Scene 99. (FLASH) Is admitted —

Scene 100. HALLWAY (AS IN 86).
Mrs. Cabot advances to greet Duane. Agitated and talking rapidly — wrings hands — Duane strives to collect thoughts — they enter drawing room —

Scene 101. SAME AS 87 (DRAWING ROOM).
Duane advising Mrs. Cabot who listens attentively — says:

SPOKEN LEADER: "ANNOUNCE MY ENGAGEMENT TO HELEN — PERHAPS SHE WILL DENY IT AND WE CAN TRACE HER.
BACK TO SCENE. Mrs. Cabot willing. Duane expresses his distaste for situation — gesticulates impatiently — takes card from pocket (same as summoned him before exemption board) — shows her (don't flash) — Mrs. Cabot sympathetic — says:

SPOKEN LEADER: "TOO BAD YOU MUST APPEAR BEFORE THAT DISHONORABLE DOCTOR HOWARD!"

BACK TO SCENE. Duane registers it is shameful — then has an inspiration — likes it — smiles — looks wicked — says cryptically:

SPOKEN LEADER: "HIS LACK OF HONOR GIVES ME AN IDEA!"

BACK TO SCENE. Rises — will put it into action — Cut.

Scene 102. INTERIOR OF LARGE ROOM (Long shot, but with entry of characters move camera closer — TRUCK UP). Evidently public room. Long table with chairs. Sign on wall — large letters — says: "Exemption Board 21." Enter about twenty men (truck up) coming from all walks of life — Doctor Howard among them. They seat themselves about table, Doctor in foreground. One rises — addresses others — says:

SPOKEN LEADER: "OUR EXEMPTION BOARDS MUST BE KEPT ABOVE POLITICS OR GRAFT. WE ARE PATRIOTIC SERVANTS OF THE PEOPLE."

BACK TO SCENE. Others applaud — Doctor joins in heartily — speaker seats himself — talk general and animated — Cut.

LEADER: HELEN BECOMES A NURSE.

Scene 103. INTERIOR OF HOSPITAL WARD.

Helen in nurse's costume being shown through wards by head-nurse, who is indicating her duties — many beds — patients — etc.

Scene 104. CLOSE VIEW (SEMI-CLOSE-UP).

A girl in small bed — asleep — same Dope Victim of Scene 45. Head nurse points her out to Helen —

Scene 105. BACK TO 103.

Doctor Howard enters ward: Passes among beds — smiles at some patients who hail him eagerly — he moves toward Helen and nurse —

Scene 106. SEMI-CLOSE-UP OF DOPE VICTIM.

Doctor halts beside her — feels pulse — smiles gently — stands and looks at her — sighs — Cut.

Scene 107. SIMILAR TO 103 BUT SLIGHTLY CLOSER.

Head nurse designating Doctor to Helen, who is biting lip as she recognizes him — nurse says:

SPOKEN LEADER: "HE'S A FINE MAN — HE CURED THAT DOPE FIEND — BROUGHT HER HERE AT HIS OWN EXPENSE!"

BACK TO SCENE. Nurse enthusiastic about Doctor — Helen affected by memories — winks back tears — regains con-

trol — smiles at nurse, who leads her toward the Doctor — Helen rather shy —

Scene 108. SAME AS 106.

Nurse touches Doctor's arm — introduces Helen as nurse — Doctor controls his surprise and emotion — nurse moves off with nod to Helen — Helen smiles at him — offers hand which he takes — she turns to sleeping girl — Doctor takes paper from pocket and refers to it — puzzled — looks at Helen — (flash).

INSERT (On Screen) Item — Announces engagement of Miss Helen Cabot to Mr. Duane Warrington, etc.

BACK TO SCENE. Doctor about to ask Helen if it is so — but changes mind — puts paper back in pocket — turns to Helen who is watching sleeping girl — Helen indicates she thinks Doctor's cure is fine — looks at him with admiration — he is embarrassed but pleased — the old light comes back into face — he shows some emotion — takes her hand — she returns his clasp —

Scene 109. EXTERIOR OF HOSPITAL — AT ENTRANCE.

Doctor and Helen emerge — she is dressed for street — they are talking happily — — he is very much changed — gayer — they pass down walk — Cut.

LEADER: MRS. CABOT SEEKS HER LAWYER FOR ADVICE.

Scene 110. LOBBY OF AN OFFICE BUILDING.
Elevators in background — passing throngs. Mrs. Cabot enters scene — enters elevator — Cut.

Scene 111. OUTSIDE DOOR OF OFFICE.
Door has words in large letters, "Amos Quigg, Attorney" — painted on glass. Mrs. Cabot enters scene and door — Cut.

Scene 112. ANTE-ROOM QUIGG'S OFFICES — OSTENTATIOUS — SHOWY.
Stenographer pounds typewriter in background — Quigg at her side, evidently dictating — Mrs. Cabot enters — he turns, smiles and hastens to her — apologizes to her for her reception — bows her toward inner office seen at one side —

Scene 113. INNER OFFICE.
Mrs. Cabot seated by Quigg who is very deferential — he seats self and asks her business — she breaks down — cries into handerchief — he is puzzled — alarmed — questions her. She says sobbingly:

SPOKEN LEADER: "MY DAUGHTER HAS RUN AWAY AND ALL MY EFFORTS TO FIND HER ARE USELESS!"
BACK TO SCENE. Quigg surprised — ponders matter — twirls thumbs while Mrs. Cabot regains her control — questions her deftly — she replies — he smiles — she is agitated and begs him to help her — he reassures her with gestures as if talking to child — she is encouraged — he reaches

for 'phone on desk at side and talks into it emphatically — Cut.

Scene 114. AN OFFICE—RATHER DINGY.
Man at desk — sign over desk says, "Private Detective Agency" — Man at desk gets call — answers telephone — talks — nods affirmatively — signifies he will handle matter — leave it to him — hangs up — calls to someone — an operative enters — man gives him brief but pointed instructions — operative registers he is on the job — ready — gets hat and prepares to go out — Cut.

Scene 115. SAME AS 113.
Quigg reading — stenographer enters and signifies that there is a caller — Quigg says, "show him in" — stenographer exits — enter operative. Quigg waves him to seat — takes his card — satisfied — gives him a graphic account of matter — Cut.

Scene 116. SAME AS 93. (DUANE'S APARTMENT).
Duane counting a big roll of money — smiles with a meaning expression — winks significantly — Cut.

Scene 117. SAME AS 77 (DOCTOR'S PRIVATE OFFICE).
Doctor Howard going through mail — boy enters and signifies that someone is outside — Doctor indicates to send him in — goes back to mail — enter Duane. Doctor surprised — rises — Duane represses his distaste and speaks urbanely — condescending

but polite — Doctor offers him seat — they gaze at each other as if taking measure — Doctor enquires Duane's business— Duane talks rather hesitantly at first — but gathers his courage as he progresses — Doctor puzzled — Duane takes large roll of money from clothing — lays it on desk — says:

SPOKEN LEADER: "IT IS YOURS IF YOU WILL EXEMPT ME FROM THIS INFERNAL DRAFT."

BACK TO SCENE. Doctor rises angrily — about to kick Duane from office — Duane makes as if to retreat hastily — Doctor looks at him and remembers article in paper — gets paper from drawer of desk — hands to Duane — questions him — Duane examines paper (flash) —

INSERT (On Screen) Same newspaper item as formerly, announcing Helen's engagement to Duane.

BACK TO SCENE. Duane replies to Doctor's question — nods affirmatively — it is true — "he will marry her" —Doctor evidently hit a hard blow —

Scene 118. CLOSE-UP.

Duane smiling craftily — winks aside — registers he will "tell a good lie" — wicked smile —

Scene 119. CLOSE-UP.

Doctor registers grief — then a suspicion dawns on him and he is relieved — gazes at Duane keenly —

Scene 120. BACK TO 117.
Doctor reaches over and takes up money — fingers it — Duane delighted with this — Doctor says:

SPOKEN LEADER: "LEAVE IT WITH ME — I'LL THINK IT OVER — YOU CAN RETURN FOR AN ANSWER."
BACK TO SCENE. Duane believes he has succeeded — smiles — signifies he will return later — exit —Doctor looks at money — counts it — smiles — puts it in drawer — ponders —

Scene 121. SAME AS 108 (HOSPITAL).
Dope girl sitting up in bed — looks greatly improved — talks to Helen who comes to her — Cut.

Scene 122. SAME AS 105.
(Flash) Doctor Howard passing along ward to bed of Dope Patient — sees Helen in distance — smiles and hastens toward her—

Scene 123. SAME AS 121 (IN HOSPITAL).
Dope Victim sees Doctor coming — points — smiles — Helen rises as Doctor enters scene — he greets her warmly — she gives him a welcoming smile — they both turn to Dope Victim who seems greatly improved — about cured — girl rubs her arm — smiles as if she is free from it — Doctor questions her — she shakes head and frames words "I don't want it any more"—

Scene 124. EXTERIOR OF HOSPITAL — STREET (DISTANT SHOT).
Operative of Scene 114 enters scene with

another employe. Operative signifies that hospital is the place he is interested in — they pass on slowly —

Scene 125. ANOTHER VIEW OF HOSPITAL INTERIOR (CORRIDOR).
Doctor and Helen about to leave building together — he tells her, "I have something to tell you" — and takes her arm — she is rather surprised but ready to go with him — they pass out —

Scene 126. STREET AS IN 124.
Car at curb, Doctor and Helen come from building — enter car — drive off — operative and his companion enter scene. Operative indicates that he has found his party — points — excited — another car rolls into scene — operative and companion jump in hastily with quick instructions to driver — who goes off in direction taken by Doctor and Helen — Cut.

Scene 127. EXTERIOR OF DOCTOR'S OFFICE.
Entrance to office-building — Doctor and Helen drive into scene. Alight and enter building — car drives out of scene. Car with operatives comes in — halts — operatives tell driver to go on and he does — Cut.

Scene 128. ANTE ROOM (AS IN 78).
Enter Doctor and Helen — she is pleased to be in his office — registers she recognizes it — gives him a rather enticing glance — he is happy — they enter inner office —

Scene 129. PRIVATE OFFICE (AS IN 120). Doctor seats Helen — sits beside her near desk — takes paper from drawer — shows her (don't flash it) — she reads article he designates — astonished and then angry dashes paper to floor — denies it — he is pleased — relieved — he goes to safe in background — gets money — shows her — she playfully says, "you are rich" — sees his grave expression — questions him — he replies — she is amazed — horrified — revolted — says:

SPOKEN LEADER: "WHY DIDN'T YOU THROW HIM OUT"?

Doctor hesitates — then says:

SPOKEN LEADER: "I COULD USE THE MONEY, BUT I WANT TO PROVE TO YOU MY KIND OF HONOR."

BACK TO SCENE. Helen understands. Registers playfully that he need not "prove it" to her — he bends over her tenderly — she looks up — their lips meet — she is embarrassed — affects to be angry — then laughs as he catches her hands — he joins her — he puts money back in safe — returns to her — she rises to go — he takes her in arms — they kiss again —

LEADER: QUIGG ADVISES MRS. CABOT OF HIS SUCCESS, AND SHE SETS OUT ON TROUBLE BENT.

Scene 130. ANTE-ROOM (AS IN 128). Mrs. Cabot enters — surveys office through lorgnette—haughty to office boy—signifies

she will go in unannounced — sweeps boy aside — throws up hands at door in well-bred horror —

Scene 131. CLOSE-UP OF UPPER (GLASS PORTION) DOOR.
Through the glass may be seen form of man and woman in embrace and their lips meet and linger —

Scene 132. BACK TO 130.
Mrs. Cabot registers she needs explanation — office boy in great glee — laughs to self — Cut —

Scene 133. SAME AS 129. (INTERIOR OFFICE).
Doctor and Helen separate reluctantly — and just as Mrs. Cabot enters — Mrs. Cabot in angry mood — Helen looks guilty — so does Doctor — both struggle to keep from laughing — Mrs. Cabot makes angry demand for an explanation — they laugh — she sinks exhaustedly into a chair — sits there looking at daughter with aristocratic horror in face — then looks at Doctor who gives her a smile — Helen lays hand on her mother's arm — then kisses her suddenly — is reproved but not very forcefully — smiles — tells mother she has something to show her — says:

SPOKEN LEADER: "WILL YOU FORGIVE ME, IF I CAN PROVE SOME PEOPLE'S TRUE HONOR?"
BACK TO SCENE. Mrs. Cabot doesn't understand — but when reassured — signi-

fies she is willing to see — has reached stage where nothing matters any more — Helen and Doctor talk swiftly aside — Doctor nods emphatically — looks at watch — Cut.

Scene 134. CLOSE-UP — Watch shows time to be 1:35 P. M.)

Scene 135. BACK TO 133.
Doctor registers they have time — Helen touches her mother on shoulder — mother rises — Doctor leads ladies toward closet door — explaining something — opens door to closet — Mrs. Cabot draws back — but Helen urges her gently forward —

Scene 136. CLOSE-UP.
Closet — roomy — Helen delighted — claps hands — runs into closet — shows that it will hold two — Mrs. Cabot makes resigned motion — protesting but resigned — Doctor and Helen laugh — Cut.

Scene 137. ANTE ROOM (132).
Doctor comes out of private office — hands office boy coin — tells him he can clear out — waves him off — boy glad to leave — grabs hat and beats it — Doctor looks at watch —

Scene 138. CLOSE-UP.
Watch now shows time to be 20 minutes of 2 (P. M.).

Scene 139. BACK TO 137.
Doctor goes to 'phone — calls number — impatient — gets reply — talks earnestly and emphatically —

Scene 140 INTERIOR OF POLICE STATION.
Man at desk — gets call — takes down 'phone receiver — bored — talks — gets interested — brisk — hangs up — gives several officers quick instructions — they go out —

Scene 141. SAME AS 139. Doctor hangs up — goes into inner office.

Scene 142. (Flash) Police car with several officers on street —

Scene 143. SAME AS 135.
Doctor beckons Helen and Mrs. Cabot into closet — Mrs. Cabot has evidently been told something — now ready to enter — no longer protests — Doctor locks closet door — puts key into his pocket — laughs — Cut.

Scene 144. EXTERIOR OF BUILDING (127).
Police car arrives — officers get out and enter building — chauffeur moves on slowly — Cut.

Scene 145. SAME AS 143.
Doctor instructing officers — puts one behind safe — another back of desk — takes roll of money from safe designates it will be bait — officers register that they understand —

Scene 146. SAME AS 144 (Exterior).
Duane's car at curb — police car not in sight — Duane gets out — gives instructions to driver — enters the building hastily — Cut.

Scene 147. INTERIOR OF CLOSET.
Helen supporting Mrs. Cabot who is about to collapse — but more affectation than reality — Cut.

Scene 148. ANTE-ROOM.
Duane enters cautiously — looks about to steady nerve — sees no one — reassured — goes to door of private office — goes in cautiously —

Scene 149. INTERIOR OF PRIVATE OFFICE.
Doctor meets him casually — beckons him to seat — points to money — signifies it is not enough — can't accept it — Duane surprised — nettled — talks volubly — capitulates — draws more money from pockets — talks as he counts it off — offers Doctor additional sum — Doctor affects hesitation — Duane seizes whole sum and shakes it under Doctor's nose — talks — trying to persuade Doctor — Cut.

Scene 150. SAME AS 147.
Helen throws hand over Mrs. Cabot's mouth to stop her exclamation at what she hears — both of them listen with strained expression of attention — Cut.

Scene 151. SAME AS 149.
Doctor makes signal — officers jump out — Duane turns to flee — drops money — Doctor seizes him and they struggle — Duane with the strength of fear — Duane gradually overpowered — officers aid — officer slips bracelets on him — he is thoroughly cowed — begs them not to take

him — none listens to his plea — Doctor waves him away with loathing — officers carry him off still pleading wildly —

Scene 152. SAME AS 150.
Helen struggling to quiet Mrs. Cabot —

Scene 153. SAME AS 151.
Doctor opens closet door — Helen emerges supporting mother who sinks into chair — raises hands in helpless and speechless gesture — Doctor speaks, says:

SPOKEN LEADER: "THEY HEARD IT ALL AND CAUGHT HIM RED-HANDED."
BACK TO SCENE. Helen pleased — congratulates him with a kiss — he returns her caress — Mrs. Cabot too upset to protest — smiles weakly — Doctor tries to summon courage to ask Mrs. Cabot for Helen — Helen nudges him on — then says mischieviously:

SPOKEN LEADER: "GO ON — ASK FOR ME! DON'T STAND THERE LIKE A POOR FISH, OR I'LL THROW YOU BACK TO GROW!"
BACK TO SCENE. Doctor and Helen both laugh — he gently asks Mrs. Cabot for Helen — she indicates "yes" — Helen and Doctor delighted — embrace — Mrs. Cabot hides her face — Doctor says:

SPOKEN LEADER.* "WHEN WE RETURN FROM OVERSEAS, WE'LL BE MARRIED."
BACK TO SCENE. Helen proud of him — ready to go — both very happy —

*The leaders or subtitles of a continuity are often numbered consecutively, beginning with the first; some producers might require it.

Scene 154. CLOSE-UP.
Their lips meet — Fade out.

Scene 155. HARBOUR (ANYWHERE).
A transport accompanied by destroyers and small craft of war — flying American flag — is leaving port with destination unknown. Fade.

AUTHOR'S NOTE TO CONTINUITY: In addition to the devices* illustrated in the continuity, the following are examples of how to call for certain other devices in the script. They are merely examples and do not refer to any particular scenario:

(Split-Screen)

Scene 122. SPLIT-SCREEN 1. AS IN 115. Corner of prison cell. Andrew seen in stripes. Raises hands impotently to heaven — lets head fall on hands.
2. AS IN 20. Corner of bedroom. Baby in crib with Annie sitting beside it. She shakes head in gesture of hopeless misery, raising eyes to heaven while baby smiles innocently and pulls at crib.
(Fade Vision).

Scene 77. COURT ROOM NEAR PRISONER'S DOCK.
Peter in dock — officer seated near at hand — Peter wears gloomy air — hopeless — lets head sink on chest — Fade Out.

*The fundamental devices possible to a camera are few in number; only new combinations or adaptations of the old ones are at present possible. Chapter 21 explains all worth the aspirant's attention, as well as the many different names for the same thing. Courses which offer the "secret principles of writing" should be avoided as the sure product of charlatanism.

Scene 78. AS IN 18. (EXTERIOR OF COTTAGE).

FADE INTO scene — Annie in yard before cottage steps — gathering flowers — smiling happily — FADE OUT —

Scene 79. BACK TO 77.

FADE INTO — Peter's shoulders shake convulsively in grief — by a great effort he regains his control — sits up straight — will meet his fate bravely — Etc.
(Straight Vision)

Scene 102. INTERIOR OF CABARET (DANCING).

Pauline seated at table in foreground with Rudolph. He fills her glass but she does not notice — thinking of something else — he tries to direct her attention to the dancers but she does not heed. VISION appears above table in which her old mother is seen smiling benignly. VISION FADES OUT — and Pauline expresses anguish and fear — draws away from Rudolph's hand as he touches her arm and then rises suddenly and registers she will leave the place — ignores Rudolph's protests — Etc.

(The Iris or Vignette)

Scene 52. INTERIOR OF BED ROOM.

Bed at side — chair near table. Enter Eloise in street clothes, carrying parcel. Puts parcel on table — tosses street coat and hat on bed. Seats self in chair and unwraps the parcel. Takes out a revolver — examines it shakily — afraid of it —

shuts eyes as she pulls trigger to try it — puts it on table. Rises and carries wrappings through door to connecting room. Returns with book and throws self on bed to read. IRIS DOWN to revolver on table, then FADE OUT.

Scene 53. EXTERIOR OF ELABORATE COUNTRY HOME.

IRIS UP from house in background. Lawn in foreground. Party of children playing croquet with merry laughter — Etc.

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER XXIV

DETAILED SYNOPSES, AND ANALYSIS OF SYNOPTICAL STRUCTURE*

Modern methods of writing and submitting photoplay material, from the point of view of the free-lance or independent contributor, center upon the detailed synopsis, a dramatic story akin to the short-story and yet often compacting into a Ms. of not more than three thousand words (sometimes longer), and usually from two to three thousand, enough plot material for a novel. Few authors care to be staff continuity writers — a position that tends to submerge and strangle all originality and idealism; comparatively few outside writers know how to write an acceptable SCENARIO, and those who do seldom know the equipment of a given producer or the idiosyncrasies of his directors and stars. Hence, the synoptical drama is the logical upshot of the old days of the scenario Ms. Practically all material now submitted to producers is in the form of synopses; and there are numerous schools which teach synopsis writing by mail, most of which — ninety-five per cent — are to be carefully shunned by the wary.

*Writing the Short-Story, 1909; A Handbook of Literary Criticism, 1906.

LITERARY STYLE OF THE DETAILED SYNOPSIS

In the composition of a synopsis literary STYLE, meaning that mastery of written language acquired only after years of practice, is UNNECESSARY. And yet this assertion should not be construed as an encouragement to incompetency; for the half-baked story, banal and illogical, told clumsily in words of one syllable, has no chance of acceptance, if, indeed, it is READ! Those whose creative gifts are decidedly commonplace, whose literary and dramatic talent will never reach beyond the primer, had best abandon their efforts. If the reader of this book is one who would never think to attempt a short-story or short play, believing them to require ability far beyond his own, then, unless he can solve the creative tests in Chapter 1 with ease and adaptability, he had best not waste his time in writing photoplays. The future photoplaywright will compete with the fiction author and, from the cinematic viewpoint, beat him at his own game.

But to return to style. One may employ the simple, narrative style of the prose tale. Forthright characterization, vivid but simple description of backgrounds, deft touches for atmosphere and TONE, these are the gist of synoptical style. On the other hand, an acquaintance with the styles of many successful authors tends to develop that asset, style, in the novice. To the end of study, the following list of authors is advised, from the reading of whom one becomes familiar with a wide range of expression-forms and acquires a good vocabulary of literary words: Poe, Irving, Hawthorne, Stevenson, Dickens, Kipling, O.

Henry, Charles Reade, Blackmore, Hall Caine' and Marion Crawford. Beware of a style similar to that of Bulwer Lytton and of the roughness of Blackmore. Also observe that the digressiveness and episodic diffusion of a Hugo are to be avoided. Although the student may never become a stylist and need not BE as the writer of synopses, yet his powers of expression cannot fail to improve by friendship with the authors worth while. The synopsis which is deftly and interestingly worded does its subject justice and holds the attention of the jaded editor or director.

The student already possessed of literary ability, of style, technical understanding, a sense of plot and proportion, is fortunate, for he knows the metes and bounds of the matter and will instinctively fall in with the synoptical structure and composition. The beginner should examine the specimens given and confine himself to simple, direct writing.

The Point of Attack

The beginning of the story, the point of attack, is analogous to the short-story, except that the dialogue opening is taboo. As in the continuity, the story commences in the critical conditions, or with the events precedent or antecedent, and leads to the excitant. The story may begin:

(a) With description of setting and an introduction of the chief characters.

(b) With description, characterization, atmosphere and mood.

(c) With character delineation predominant and initial character episodes.

(d) With incidents or episodes suggested, as in the example given a few pages further on.

(e) With major or plot events, subordinating character, setting and the like, and leaving them for later treatment.

(f) With a philosophical overture, as in "Moths and Candles."

A philosophical overture is an opening sentence or paragraph which begins the story in an unmistakably philosophical strain, placing the stress on the philosophical side of the events.

Examples of synopses which illustrate each of the divisions given above are not possible in the scope of this book; but the student may and should refer to short-story openings in current and standard fiction for guides.*

As a rule, a brief opening which carries the reader swiftly to the issues at stake, the complications, is desirable; yet the proper details, the characters and the mood should be worked in so as to lend the incidents the lifelikeness and plausibility required. The beginning should not be verbose, but lengthy enough to serve its purpose, i. e., introduce its facts and personages, set its atmosphere and bring in its background. It should not be too heavy nor serious in tone, nor, on the other hand, trite, commonplace, to the point of stupidity. Irrelevant details, useless moralizing, dialogue and long-winded descriptions may safely be left out of the synoptical opening.

An Example of the Synoptical Opening

As an illustration of the synoptical opening and initial development, the following paragraphs

*See The Necklace, The String, The Minister's Black Veil, Reality (Reade), Ali Baba, The Wind in the Rose-Bush, and others.

written from the continuity of Chapter 23 are, perhaps, helpful. The student should compare this beginning with the continuity opening:

SOME PEOPLE'S HONOR

DETAILED SYNOPSIS

With screaming headlines the newspapers announced a state of war with Germany. At last we were in it up to the chin — and the news made everybody feel better! Before the bulletin boards excited and enthusiastic crowds fought for a glimpse of the latest dispatch or struggled to buy a copy of the extras poured from the presses. It was that hour of celebration, of gaiety, before a nation settles itself to the grim job on hand.

Even the less EAGER young men, the clubmen and butterflies who frequented the brilliantly social atmosphere of the CABOT home, carried themselves with an added self-respect. But in the aristocratic Cabot mansion, correctly appointed in every detail and presided over by MRS. RODNEY CABOT, widow of one of the city's most exclusive sons, little of this atmosphere could penetrate; a LITTLE was welcome, perhaps, but not too much, don't you know!

To be sure, HELEN CABOT, her mother's only child and affianced wife of DUANE WARRINGTON, burned with patriotic fire; but it was almost quenched under the polished disapproval of her fiance. For Duane, polished scion of ease, having no occupation save that of society but following it to the complete

approval of Mrs. Cabot, was distinctly not the kind of man one looked to for adventures overseas. One could not even think of him as a WILLING soldier.

To Helen, sick of the EMPTINESS and mockery of the social whirl, bored to desperation by lack of the GENUINE, the true, the sincere in her life, this last disappointment was the final straw! No longer could she regard Duane in the tolerant light of pre-war days.

Etc. Etc.

The emphasized words in the above example are those words which give the narrative a certain TONE or significance. This is not atmosphere, but something quite apart from it; for we could delete these words without altering, in the least, the war-time atmosphere. Mood, which is pretty much the same as tone, is created by a similar choice and arrangement of words placed to have the premeditated effect. For mood and tone read the story, The Wind in the Rose-Bush.

THE LINE OF DEVELOPMENT

In the earlier chapters of this book the advisability was shown of reducing all photodramatic material to a FORMULA of three terms, of shaping the material according to a moral problem, of building a plot by cause and effect, of inventing tactics for the strategy, of arranging the material for suspense, surprise and specifically dramatic effect, of the dramatic sequence; in fine, all of the principles of effectual construction were seen to play a part in the development of the story.

In view of these criteria, it is well to stress the fact that the formula and moral problem are safeguards for the synoptical story, and their importance should not be overlooked by the tyro. Aside from the fact that all photoplays should have significance, albeit melodramatic, the aspirant has, with the formula for structural control and the moral problem as a philosophical guide, a Polaris by which to keep his bearings. He may while creating the story go into side issues, run up blind-alleys, reconsider his incidents; but always he may return to the place of outset quickly to readjust himself because of his bearings found by these pilots. They keep him safely in the main line of development, on the main track, away from the labyrinth of minor trails that lead to nothing worth while.

After the story is reduced to formula and plotted, after the tactical development is begun, the author may make his first rough synopsis; from this he may, after one or many revisions — as many as his material and methods of work require — develop his final, detailed synopsis and complete manuscript. In this process it is well to keep the material PLASTIC — a term long used by writers on the technique of fiction and play writing. Plastic material is that in which details and events are not too rigidly or rapidly decided upon, but in which any beneficial changes may be made whenever they occur to the author. Revision is not an admission of weakness, as is supposed by many beginners, but the logical perfection of the experienced author; careful, conscientious work inevitably demands revision. Nothing is perfect the first time.

NOVELTY OF CHARACTERS AND EVENTS

Perhaps the best advice as to story development is to let the characters work out their own salvation; that is, to refer back to the characters and their accelerators, their mood, for the originality of the incidents. In order to have an original story with a logical or lifelike "new twist," it is not necessary, as is mistakenly supposed, to have new settings, new atmosphere, new fundamental dramatic situations (of which there are only 36!). On the contrary, the effect lurks in selecting fresh, NOVEL characters, with new viewpoints, new traits, new ambitions. Thus, we are unavoidably led, as authors, into new trails of event, new combinations of incident, new SITUATIONS, as they are called. A situation is some upshot, some complex of incident, some set of motives come to a head, which combines one or more crises and an issue for solution. We can lead up to novel situations only through novelty of characters; and the writer who essays novelty of situation with the old, stereotyped figures of melodrama, banal and obsolete, may, indeed, lug in new or extraordinary events, but the result will be illogical and implausible, because we cannot associate the characters with new incidents — cannot dissociate them from the clap-trap with which they have for years been connected.

The characters of a story, once chosen, should be introduced in the action as early as possible, especially if principals. But, of course, the nature of the story governs their appearance early or late in the incidents. They should be vividly portrayed for the reader, so that an editor understands not merely their names but as well their

traits, some of their habits, their motives, their reactions, and the like. The student may refer to the chapter on characterization. It hardly seems necessary to add that the influence of character upon event or of event upon character should be carefully developed in the synopsis.

Description of Setting and Atmosphere

In the progress of the story certain localities and places will become involved with the incidents; there will be a certain atmosphere to be created. The author must manage to outline both setting and atmosphere in detail sufficient for the impressions desired. Sets need not be described too minutely, the main details being as a rule enough; but if the background is historical or otherwise of importance PER SE, more detail must be supplied. Atmosphere may be given in the opening, or wherever it changes or exerts an influence on the plot. In the paragraphs written from "Some People's Honor," we have the atmosphere of war-days established in the opening sentence. The tone and mood are begun in the second paragraph and completed in the third. The initial facts are set forth in connection with the characters; there are episodes suggested and a setting is sketched in. Complete character descriptions are not given the first time a personage is brought on the scene, but usually bit by bit as the events progress. Character detail should be given thus in piecemeal and in the dramatic sequence of the material, that is, in sequence according to its influence upon event or of event upon it. In the first paragraph the episodes before the bulletin boards are given; and in the continuity a beginning

is made with similar episode. The detailed synopsis at the end of this chapter will also repay close analysis as to opening and development.

TONE AND ATMOSPHERE

It should be observed that atmosphere is the general AIR, local or national, of a story. Let us define tone and mood also in relation to atmosphere. TONE is the predominant spirit of the story; MOOD pertains to the prevalent motives and inhibitions of the characters, the accelerators and retardants. In the detailed synopsis, the atmosphere of the opening is that of the small-town. The tone is that of ambition; the mood is that of conflicting love and ambition. When the two girls have arrived in the city, the atmosphere changes, but the tone and mood remain. The atmosphere becomes that of bohemian life. Later, the tone resolves itself into mood, when the stage is renounced in favor of love by Anne, but it has been constant throughout the narrative. Atmosphere and tone are established by the careful suggestions or preparation of the author made at the point of the story best calculated to stress the effect — in the proper SEQUENCE. Both of these attributes are found in all stories of a grade higher than "Nellie, the Cloak Model," and are not always absent from the low-grade melodrama of stage and screen.

OBLIGATORY SCENES

In Chapter 23 it was explained that the scene obligatory is one made necessary by happenings earlier in the action from which certain issues arise that must be settled between certain charac-

ters, must be brought to a head or fought out, or dismissed with finality by the personages involved; and that the spectators are led to anticipate and desire these scenes. The beginner should be very cautious in the plotting of his story and its synoptical development lest he leave out some scene to which the audience would naturally look forward. That is a fatal defect, for, even if the story get to the screen with the scene still wanting, the effect will not be what the anxious and prideful author intended. The average director and cutter have a predilection for leaving out or "cutting out" the obligatory scenes. Sometimes the censor functions to eliminate such a scene, but more often not.

A few examples seem called for. In the triangular photoplays a scene between husband and wife, in which their misunderstandings are cleared up, or in which facts are disclosed that lead to a crisis, is essential. In the "Real Adventure," the scene in which the husband asks the peregrinating wife if she has all the while been true to him seems inevitable; we can feel it coming. In "Orphans of the Storm," the unavoidable scene in which Pierre and Jacques come to cold steel over Louise is a minor scene obligatory. In "Foolish Wives" the scene between the neglectful husband and the adventuring count is obligatory. In "The Eternal Flame," some of the scenes between the Duchess and the General are entirely unavoidable and are in the nature of scenes obligatory. For an illustration of a photoplay from which the obligatory scene is missing, see Chapter 23, and also study the current releases.

The obligatory scene is one long recognized as

essential in the technique of playwriting; and the principle is applicable with emphasis to the "movies," since so many photodramas are released which are wanting in these "big moments" of the true drama, these anticipated sops to the emotional enjoyment of the spectators. For the scene obligatory is primarily EMOTIONAL.

Other Points on Synopsis Writing

Although speech or dialogue is not — as in the short-story — an element of synoptical structure, and should be rigidly excluded for the most part, yet, if an occasional brief speech will offer a suggestion to the continuity or title-writer, it may be included in the form of BRIEF dialogue — usually a single sentence. Only where the speech is such as to offer a suggestion for a subtitle should it be used.

As to retrospect or the reminiscential method of introducing past events into the narrative by the device of the story-within-a-story, there is no place for it in the synopsis. As in the continuity, the author should begin with antecedent incidents or prologue as a part of the critical conditions, proceeding to his excitant and complications as rapidly as possible. If one wishes to suggest the brief vision within the frame or the "fade vision," he may do so by referring to some brief event or episode already past or supposed to have occurred prior to the opening, but the matter referred to must be capable of being shown on the screen in a single scene, or, at most, in two or three scenes. It is best to make sure that it can be shown in a single scene.

Matter Irrelevant to the Synopsis

The subjoined list of literary artifices and conventions, TABOO IN A DETAILED SYNOPSIS, is given for the beginner's guidance:

Dialogue, except rarely as we have seen
Padding with unnecessary episodes or details
Useless moralizing and trite philosophy
Anecdotes
Reminiscence or the story-within-a-story
Verbose descriptions of character or setting
Useless physical movements or business
Unimportant objects.

Objectivity and Symbolism

As we have seen in discussing foretokening or preparation, the judicious use of objects or symbols is essential to the pictorial drama. A word of admonition to the beginner might be added, advising against the use of objects by the principal characters, unless they are to play some part in the action. To this rule we may mention as exceptions such articles of personal adornment as fans, monocles, wrist watches, lorgnettes, clothing, weapons, and the like; and yet these should be mentioned sparingly and only for atmosphere, unless they are of dramatic importance. On the other hand, suggestions for business, gestures and facial expression, may be given in all important scenes. The object of the detailed synopsis is to create a PICTORIAL impression on the reader, to make the producer visualize the story and see it in terms of the camera. To this end all pictorial suggestions are admissible.

THE TERMINATION

The development of the synopsis should lead to a climax at or near the end of the story; and the story should terminate as suggested in the chapter on scenario writing.

THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

In the complete manuscript a cast of characters precedes the synopsis and is often followed by a brief synopsis or RESUME of the story. In Chapter 14 the cast has been discussed — also in Chapter 25. A good cast gives the names and relationships of all the important characters, and a complete list of the minors, including a tentative list of extras. Of course, the cast is only TENTATIVE for additions or deletions are certain to be made in production.

The subject of the brief synopsis is a vexed one. Many producers expect the manuscript to contain a synopsis, preceding the detailed synopsis, which gives only an outline of the plot events, enabling the reader to decide (?) whether or not the story is worth reading in full. In the footnote to the principal synopsis at the end of this chapter, there is a hint on this same topic. Even the author who possesses literary style finds himself put to it to do justice to any good story in a few hundred words (usually not more than 250 to 300 words), especially if his story be large of significance — feature material. Although the time of the producers may be valuable, yet such an asinine restriction as this is causing the number of submitted scripts to fall off in many editorial offices. No editor of a first-class publication would require submitting authors to preface each

story sent in with a brief resume of two hundred words! No intelligent editor would EXPECT to judge the merits of manuscripts by such an idiotic device. It is this refusal to look at submitted stories in the editorial light which has caused a scarcity of good material in filmdom. The brief synopsis shall be eliminated; but if at present it is demanded, the author may include it. If, however, he has a very unusual story, he had best not try to do it justice in resume but should let it be read on its merits. The author is often hiding his light under a bushel in attempting to give a brief synopsis of his work.

Fallacious Notions on the "Movies"

It speaks badly for the "movie" personnel that most of the fallacies upon the industry come from within. For example, the wiseacres of the industry, who have an awakening just ahead of them, are unanimous in the verdict that the public wants adaptations or versions of published novels, magazine stories or stage plays, because these happen to be known to a number of people. The public, on the other hand, judges every photoplay solely on its merits as entertainment, as the box-office receipts are now beginning to make manifest to the producers; and a weak story cannot slip by because of the name of an author, director or star. The public has been fooled so often in the past by inferior screen versions of literary and theatrical successes, advertised as the last word in screen art, that it is no longer moved as formerly by publicity; it will be even more deaf to such advertising next year and the year after that. The public wants its

money's worth; and many published stories and stage plays, however well written they might be in their original medium, cannot be pictorialized effectively. This is a fact which shall literally be forced on the consciousness of the producers in the future. In the future material for adaptation will be selected for its pictorially dramatic qualities, and adaptations will perforce be fewer and better.

Another hoary misconception is the notion that photoplay-goers soon forget the story and remember only their favorite star. The class which does this is, compared to the millions of patrons, very small. The story is the reigning attraction; and a favorite star in a very poor story cannot recompense the spectator for his time and money. After several of these dreary exhibitions, he is ready to seek other amusement and curtail his visits to the playhouses. This fact also shall be forced in upon the film magnates in the months to come. All the tortuous publicity hoaxes in the world cannot keep a star in a stellar position without the STORY!!

ADVICE TO BEGINNERS

This book has aimed to demonstrate that the writing of synopses is an art — as much an art as the writing of fiction — and the beginner should by now regard it as such. If he does not, failure is assured. If he does, he will, of course, realize that it is quickest mastered by practice. The rejection of a few synopses does not indicate lack of ability, although it may indicate lack of practice. It is well, therefore, for the aspirant to cover with some thoroughness the assignments

given at the end of this chapter; and it is taken for granted that he has done a reasonable part of the exercises already given.

PLAYWRITING ASSIGNMENTS (ADVANCED)

1. From the continuity, "Some People's Honor," write a detailed synopsis, with cast and brief synopsis, making a few good suggestions for leaders in the form of speech.
2. From a story seen at the playhouse write a detailed synopsis, with cast, etc. sparing no effort to reproduce the story as nearly as possible.
3. From an original idea of your own develop a play germ, formulate it into a formula of 3 terms; give it a moral problem; write a plot; invent tactics, construct it according to the principles in this book; write a detailed synopsis; develop a continuity, doing the best work you are capable of; make this exercise worth while to yourself. (Only the synopsis should be submitted to producers).
4. Select an historical subject, finding any drama latent in it; add what is lacking and write a detailed synopsis, with a complete manuscript.
5. Take an idea formerly worked on and revise it into an acceptable (if possible) story, writing a detailed synopsis worthy of submission to the producers.

NOTICE

Two specimen synopses are reproduced in this chapter; the first, Moths and Candles, a drama, the second, Father's Final "Fix," a comedy. Wherever in the chapters reference is made to THE SYNOPSIS, it adverts to the first of these, the drama, unless otherwise specified.

Readers may not use the material of these synopses, nor of any other portion of this book in their own photoplays.

THE AUTHOR

MOTHS AND CANDLES

(Feature-Length Drama)

BY H. TEMPLE DEAMON

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

IMPORTANT

ANNE CAVENDIS, a modern girl with ambitions but with a woman's heart.

ARTHUR RENWICK, young engineer.

GEORGE SYLVESTER, a recruit from the little town; successful in New York theatrical ventures.

MARIBELLE RAND, Anne's chum, who desires to sing her way to fame.

JACK MARLIN, reporter on a great metropolitan newspaper.

MAX HEIMHORKER, a theatrical producer; friend of George.

SECONDARY

ANNE'S AUNT.

LUCIFER, proprieter of a school of acting.

A WOMAN SERVANT.

EXTRAS

Townspeople	Auditors and spectators
Flappers and youths	A successful actor
Relatives and friends	Editors and reporters
Vocal students	Laborers and workmen
Students of acting	A lewd woman

And the like . . .

MOTHS AND CANDLES

BRIEF SYNOPSIS*

ANNE CAVENDIS, talented in theatricals, chooses a career in New York as the protegee of her childhood playmate, GEORGE SYLVESTER, rather than be the wife of ARTHUR RENWICK, who loves her truly but has only the hardships of the young engineer to offer her.

With George and her chum, MARIBELLE, who is ambitious to be a singer, Anne goes to New York, where the girls enter schools. They meet the gay and often conscienceless friends of George; and MAX, a play producer, takes a fancy to Maribelle, but is prevented from seducing her by Anne, who has the aid of Jack, young newspaper man and lover of Maribelle.

Jack and Maribelle plan to marry when they have attained success; but Jack's play is returned by Max, whom he has offended in aiding Anne, and Maribelle's first appearance in concert is a failure. But they marry anyway, finding happiness in love. Anne, on the other hand, is a success, and, wishing to aid her friends, begs George to star her in Jack's play. He demurs and she bargains to marry him, if he consents. Seeing that she thinks he loves her honestly, when in fact he desires her as a mistress, George agrees to the bargain, not wishing to expose his real intentions.

*AUTHOR'S NOTE — The brief synopsis is advised to authors as a convenience to the readers or editors. Few authors, even those possessing literary style, can make a resume do justice to a good story. A good story is worth reading IN FULL. If demanded, the brief synopsis may be included in the script; but if the author has a very original story, it is best not to give an inferior idea of it in RESUME, but let it be read in detail. No good story will long go begging for lack of a "brief synopsis," so-called.

Anne is a hit. But one day in a crowd she sees Arthur, unseen by him, and her old love returns in a flood, making her bargain a hard one. George, sensing the conflict in Anne's soul, lures her to his country house in the hills at night, where he has prepared to possess her according to his desires. Anne penetrates his stratagem and charges him with it, but they are interrupted by the arrival of Arthur, whose car has broken down on the highway nearby. George conceals Anne, who, realizing that Arthur must not find her there, drives George's car back to New York unintercepted. Arthur, his suspicions aroused, finds a pin belonging to Anne and taxes George with her dishonor; but George, now repentent, realizing that he loves Anne truly, agrees to clear her name, which he does to Arthur's satisfaction. As the lovers are reunited, George loses the only woman he has ever really loved.

MOTHS AND CANDLES

Detailed Synopsis

In the smaller towns life is simple and ambitions run strong.

ANNE CAVENDIS, belle of Blytheville, an orphan living with an aunt, has ambition to be an actress, stimulated by success in local theatricals and the encouragement of GEORGE SYLVESTER, who, formerly a Blytheviller, now resides in New York but has returned for a few weeks to the old town.

So alluring to Anne is the rosy outline of a future career drawn for her by George that she ignores the protests of her aunt and only near

relative, for is not George her childhood friend who used to tease her for kisses and take her snubs goodnaturedly down in the old orchard, and has not he become a successful theatrical promoter and discoverer of talent?

Anne summons her chum, MARIBELLE, who also has ambitions, having sung at many local affairs where her voice was praised by doting if deceitful friends and neighbors. There in the simple but tastefully furnished sitting-room of her home Anne and Maribelle plan joint careers in New York, overcoming the objections of simple-minded relatives.

Nor can the tender raillery of ARTHUR RENWICK, who calls later that evening, dispel Anne's dream; for Arthur is a poor construction engineer, young and promising yet with success ahead of him; and his success means toil in isolated places and contact with the rougher elements of life, while Anne's dream is of applause, luxury and all the comforts of a metropolitan career. Arthur tells her of his opportunity, a great dam-building project in the West, where, perhaps, his ability shall be recognized by those in charge. He wishes her to wait for him.

Anne realizes that she loves him truly and in the struggle which follows between love and ambition who knows but what love might have — but George decides it. Dropping in on Anne later than usual he sees through the open windows giving on the veranda the little drama being played within and interrupts it in time to save the day for ambition. Arthur leaves, thinking George the favored suitor, which agrees with George's plans, for he discovered at the window

that he too loves Anne as warmly though not so honorably as Arthur.

The day of departure for the great city arrives. The quiet old streets, shady and deserted, take on some life; and on corners transient groups gather for a moment to gossip with many sage wags of the head and much lifting of eyebrows. At the rambling railway station a crowd of eager friends and acquaintances has gathered with George as the center, where he deftly lights numerous cigarettes to the envy of the clumsier-fingered natives. And Anne and Maribelle, accompanied by tearful and loquacious relatives, are greeted with a burst of admiration by a bevy of the local flappers. Anne manages to get away for a moment and looks about intently for a face she does not see, and only relinquishes the search with suppressed disappointment when George approaches.

The last advice is given, as the train pulls in, the last tearful instructions to George, who enjoys it all immensely, and, with puffs and jerks, they are off to the junction point.

And on another train rushing West a thoughtful young engineer is striving to keep his mind upon some drawings, and failing.

Arrived in New York, Anne and Maribelle are settled in apartments of modest size. Immediately they are introduced by George into the current of Bohemian life, Anne to study dramatic art at the school of "LUCIFER," Maribelle to train at a vocal school. In George's company they meet many theatrical persons, among them MAX HEIMHORKER, a theatrical magnate, who takes a fancy to Maribelle. But Maribelle returns the

interest of JACK MARLIN, a young newspaperman and acquaintance of George. The school life is interesting, for many are the gay parties originating there. The schools, says George, are the candles around which the moths spurred by ambition whirl dizzily until their wings are singed; for many are called by ambition but few are chosen by fame. He has Maribelle in mind, as it is soon apparent to all, including Anne, that Maribelle's chance of a successful career is slight. This they conceal from Maribelle, however, who is happily innocent of her limitations. Anne, on the other hand, gives every promise of success and merits the praises of Lucifer. George is inclined to sneer at the strugglers, whose antics at the acting school or din at the vocal studios arouse him to satire; but Jack sympathizes with the moths and writes an article on them for his paper.

George, a confirmed bachelor, presses his cleverly camouflaged attentions upon Anne at parties given in his luxurious bachelor apartments, while Max's infatuation for Maribelle increases. Maribelle teases Max to star her in a musical play and Max agrees to consider it. But Anne and Maribelle are careful to remain pretty closely together at all of these functions for their mutual protection; and Anne is watchful of Maribelle whose enthusiastic and not overly cautious nature causes her some worry. Maribelle is more impulsive than weak.

Max, who desires to get Maribelle alone, has an idea which he presents to George. He will invite Maribelle to attend a party to be given in the rooms of a successful actor where his oppor-

tunity will occur. George is to keep Anne out of the way, which he agrees to do.

* * * * *

Meanwhile Jack has completed his play called, "Ambition," founded on his news account of the moths who flit about the candles of the artistic professions. His newspaper associates pronounce it a masterpiece.

* * * * *

Maribelle promises to attend the party with Max under injunction to secrecy. George calls to take Anne to the theatre and Maribelle remains behind, slipping away with Max.

The famous actor is a pompous person and the crowd gathered in his rooms a gay if free one. Maribelle's fears are assuaged by Max who takes her into a room apart from the noisy carousers, locking the door furtively.

Meanwhile Jack takes his play to the offices of Max to be read and there learns from an employee that Max is to attend the party that evening with a lady whom Jack recognizes as Maribelle. On the street Jack meets Anne and George emerging from a restaurant and conveys his information to Anne, who has him hail a taxi and pretending to be ill excuses herself from the mystified George and has Jack see her home ostensibly. But they drive swiftly to the actor's rooms, where Jack waits below at Anne's request, although he protests vigorously. Anne invades the actor's rooms and demands to see Maribelle.

Behind the locked door Max has tempted Maribelle with glowing promises of stellardom and gratified whims and fancies if she will "be nice to him," as he terms it, and so effectively

that Maribelle is wavering when Anne's knock sounds. Maribelle, aroused to her position, demands that Max unlock the door, which he does realizing that the spell is broken. Anne and Maribelle descend to the car below followed by Max, whose protestations are futile, and he seeing Jack awaiting them acquires an enmity for the latter.

George who has gone to the girls' apartment finds nobody there, but Anne and Maribelle returning make excuses and he has to make the best of them. Jack tells Maribelle of his play and she agrees to marry him if he is successful with it.

* * * * *

Arthur, whose chance has come and whose ability has been demonstrated in an emergency arising in his work when he is left in charge, thinks only of Anne and repulses the women of the camp who dare to cast lewd glances in his direction.

* * * * *

Anne's talent has carried her through her work and she awaits a play suited to her, while Maribelle is to appear in recital.

George and Lucifer with Max arriving late at the recital find that the doors are locked and the attendant explains that if he were to unlock the doors the whole audience would rush out. Maribelle has failed.

Anne and Jack try to comfort her, the latter with a sore heart, for his play has been returned from Max's office without comment. He tells Maribelle that they are two of the moths whose wings have been singed; they cannot be chosen

by fame but have each other. Maribelle agrees to marry him and renounce her ambition. Anne retains Jack's play to read, as she is taken with the title.

Anne reads portions of the play to George, who declares that it suits her admirably, but, discovering that Jack is the author, dislikes to invest in it. Anne begs George to back her in it and, thinking to help Jack and Maribelle, promises that if he will do so she will marry him. George does not care to marry her, but, desiring her and seeing that she is under the illusion he wants her in marriage, consents to the bargain.

The premiere is a success; Anne is a hit. George is an envied producer; Jack is a happy author; Maribelle is a proud and happy wife; Max is a defeated libertine but game. He congratulates all and is snubbed by Jack, Maribelle and Anne.

* * * * *

Meanwhile Arthur, whose future is now assured, has returned East, coming to New York but not having heard of Anne.

* * * * *

Anne does not find her bargain so hard to think of now that success has come, until, seeing Arthur by chance in a crowd, but not being seen by him, the flood of her love runs high and overwhelms her will. She finds her bargain becoming intolerable; and George is not slow to see that the situation is not strongly in his favor. Not desiring to marry her yet not wishing to release her from her mistaken promise, he resolves to her have at any cost.

On the pretext that a party will meet them at his country home in the hills near New York,

where he is wont to entertain friends, he and Anne drive to the country house arriving after dark. Anne who finds no one there but an old serving-woman is puzzled, but George pretends that the party of friends is late, probably delayed. Anne, watchful, sees a bedroom being prepared, evidently for two, the old servant lovingly patting down the covers and smiling to herself with the odd fancies of old age; again, she discovers George in the act of doctoring wine he is pouring for her and her suspicions are aroused. She confronts him and charges him with his scheme, casting the ring he has given her at his feet and denouncing his love, so-called. George is about to confess his plan when the servant announces that there is a stranger outside whose car has broken down near the house.

Anne conceals herself in a room nearby. The stranger is Arthur. He recognizes George and they greet in a friendly manner. Arthur is mystified, however, when as he starts toward the room in which Anne is concealed, George catches his arm and prevents his entrance, carrying him elsewhere to remove the grease and dust from his person.

Anne, realizing that to be found here with George by Arthur will not do, waits until the men have gone to overlook the stalled car and then slipping out drives George's car out of the garage and softly, without lights, passes on to the main road and then to New York. George and Arthur hear a car leave, but George pretends to Arthur that it is a servant when Arthur calls his attention to it.

But when they return to the house for the night, Arthur's car being beyond repair until daylight, Arthur finds a college pin which he recognizes as Anne's; remembering the agitation of George who led him away from a closed door he was about to enter and the car heard on the road, Arthur suspects an assignation and, in a scene between himself and George, charges George with it and wrings from the aged servant a statement which he considers confirmatory. His faith in Anne, unshaken through all his loneliness, is crumbling when George, in whom the seeds of decency are present if long dormant, clears Anne's good name by showing Arthur the ring she discarded and offering to take him to her apartment in the city as an eavesdropper to his plea for her forgiveness, to which Arthur consents but with distaste.

George, secreting Arthur in the anteroom of Anne's apartment, begs Anne for forgiveness and offers her marriage; but she, while forgiving, tells him that she had rather be the wife of a good man than a success upon the stage; that only the moths who are consumed in the flame of disappointed love are to be pitied, and puts aside his pleas for her to reconsider her decision. Seeing that his presence is no longer desired, George calls Arthur, who has heard enough to convince him of Anne's faithfulness and honor, and who enters to take Anne in his arms, as George passes out after seeing the only woman he has really loved in another's arms.

THE END

FATHER'S FINAL "FIX"

(Program-Length Comedy-Drama)

BY H. TEMPLE DEAMON

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

B. ALEXANDER MCBRIDE, "Father" — wealthy banker who likes his ginger-ale highballs.

LOUISE, his daughter, who is wise to the ways of wet bankers.

FREDDY, assistant cashier in Father's bank and snuggle-pup.

MINOR CHARACTERS

RED HOGAN AND LEFTY EINSTEIN, a red-headed Irishman and a left-handed Jew, two booze bandits.

TWO PROHIBITION OFFICERS.

A "WHOLESALER," one of the bank's customers.

HIS AGENT.

A TRUCK DRIVER.

A LAWYER, evil but necessary.

A RUNNER'S AGENT.

EXTRAS

Bank Clerks
Depositors
Servants
Chauffeur
and the like

NOTE

A brief synopsis may be included before the detailed synopsis, if demanded by the producers to whom a story is to be submitted.

FATHER'S FINAL "FIX"

Detailed Synopsis

B. ALEXANDER McBRIDE, a banker, was one of the "men higher up" who finance the "wholesaler" or receiver in a booze-smuggling ring organized to run the stuff in on trucks from Canada. LOUISE, his only child and home-tie since her mother died, is just home from college, wise to the ways of thirsty widowers who wink a wicked left-eye at the Volstead act. She is puzzled to discover that, although Father has his giner-ale highballs with pleasing regularity, his "supply" mysteriously remains undiminished.

One evening as she has taken down the telephone receiver to call up FREDDY, an old friend who used to play snuggle-pup with her in high school days, she inadvertently cuts in on a conversation in which Father is the star. Some attorney is advising Father that "Big Mike" is in bad again with the bulls and asking him to come down at once and "fix" it. Father summons the car and rushes away, waving aside Louise's efforts to detain him.

Left alone, Louise is perplexed but can make nothing of the matter until she happens to glance over the evening paper which Father left scattered over the library floor. There on the front page is the story of a great capture by the zealous prohibition squad of the local police; Big Mike,

"a power in the underworld, and king of the bootleggers," has been pinched! The story even hints that "men higher up" are suspected to be back of Mike's operations.

Louise begins to understand it all. Evidently her father is a booze Lothario; she must speak to Father! Think of the risk! What WOULD the Elders in Father's church say, if Father were tapped on the wrist by the prohibition squad? So, later when Father returns, Louise, who has waited up for him, flashes the newspaper story and hints at the conversation overheard by chance.

Father laughs the matter off, gets wise, winks an experienced eye and tells her not to bother — B. Alexander McBride shall not be "molested" by the officers. But Louise is obdurate. What if he is caught? She is anxious. But Father will have none of it; he can "fix" anybody who butts in.

Louise is silenced but not convinced. She wants to bring home the danger to Father — to scare him out of his booze-running habits. She can think of none to help her but Freddy, who is assistant cashier in Father's bank. For well she knows that Freddy would gladly miss the latest meeting of the Put-and-Take Club for her sake; in fact, she is sure that he would have given her the Flapper's Earful when his pay was last raised, were it not for the fact that he would also have to tell it to Father.

Freddy rushes to Louise's aid and she outlines her idea. But Freddy is reluctant — he knows Father! So, Louise, who sees that direct action is needed, lets him understand that his reward

will be large, in fact, she makes it so much clearer than mud, that he consents to her scheme, and the evening ends in one of those enthusiastic petting parties in the old porch swing.

Freddy, who is now wise, keeps his ears open at the bank. He learns that a certain customer stands in with Father, for all his drafts drawn ostensibly on cargoes of hardware are honored by the bank, and the customer spends long hours in the private office behind locked doors. Now, this customer is never seen in company with any hardware outside of the bank, so Freddy is suspicious and pussyfoots around the private office. He listens in and hears that tomorrow evening a truck-load of the "goods" will arrive and be run into a certain warehouse. The customer must pay for it and have it removed to "his own place." Freddy hears enough to convince him that the goods is booze.

This information he carries to Louise that evening. They plan to put over their jinx on Father. They will disguise as prohibition agents (Freddy's suggestion) and Louise will dress as a man (her suggestion). Then they will raid this warehouse. In order to get Father into the net they lure him with a fake telephone call, representing that it comes from the wholesaler; there has been a fraud in loading the truck in Canada — will Father come to the warehouse at once? Father is up in the air — sure he will come!

But meanwhile the real members of the prohibition force have not been asleep. Long have they trailed this wholesaler in the belief that his calling is "wet." This evening they have followed him to the warehouse and are lurking about in

its vicinity. Inside the place the wholesaler and his agent have examined the cargo which is loaded on a truck and stands ready to be driven to the wholesaler's cache. The wholesaler is satisfied and informs the runner that he will take it. The runner departs.

But two of the city's cleverest booze-bandits, Red HOGAN and Lefty EINSTEIN, an invincible combination composed of a red-headed Irishman and a left-handed Jew, who prey upon booze-runners by "holding up" their drivers and then driving off with the cargo, the victims being legally unable to make a "noise," have spotted the prohibition officers and conceive the idea of trussing them up and taking their search warrants. They can then search the premises described in the warrants and "confiscate" the goods in the name of the "law." In an alley near the warehouse they discover and overpower the officers, tying them up in a nearby cellar and taking their warrants. Then they start for the warehouse.

Father has, meanwhile, arrived at the warehouse and has been admitted by the wholesaler and his agent. He is followed closely by Freddy and Louise disguised as officers. Freddy forces the door, carelessly left insecure, and is followed inside by Louise and then by the crooks who have located the place.

Inside Father is discovering that he has been framed when Freddy and Louise enter. The crooks also enter and are about to "pull" their gag when Freddy beats them to it by pulling his. In the confusion that follows the light is kicked out. The wholesaler and his agent get away, but Father is detained by Louise, whose male

disguise is good until it gets misplaced in the shuffle that follows. Freddy displays his gymnasium training by knocking out the crooks who get in his way in the excitement. When the light is recovered, it is seen that the plotters have captured two prohibition "officers," for the crooks produce their warrants and protest at the "interference." But Louise's disguise has been spoiled in the tussle with Father and he now recognizes his daughter with a gasp of amazement and demands explanations.

The two crooks seeing the way the wind blows, proceed to "arrest" the crowd. Father is in a quandary. Freddy and Louise are scared but game. The crooks are about to "dispose of" the cargo when Father's "fixing" ability returns to him and he manages to make it worth their while to hush the matter up and beat it, which they do.

Explanations follow. Louise tries to make Father understand that she and Freddy were acting for the best. But when Father sees Freddy remove his wig, he is infuriated and "fires" Freddy on the spot, telling him that his immediate absence will make the heart of his erstwhile boss grow fonder — perhaps!

At this juncture when all seems lost, the two genuine, all-wool-and-a-yard-wide prohibition officers, who have gotten free from their trusses and have seen a "light" and come inside to finish their unfinished business, "arrest" the crowd. This is Father's second shock, for they have real badges and are evidently real officers. The game is getting too strenuous for Father, when Freddy comes forward with a bright idea — a life saver — and demands to see the warrants of the officers.

They have none. Father takes heart; he makes it plain to them that warrants are necessary formalities. They are about to make for headquarters, when Father decides that "fixing" is the most discreet plan and persuades them to "listen to reason" and go home like good fellows with some of his jack in their pockets. They agree — being only human "ossifers" after all; but it has been a nervous evening for Father!

After the officers have departed, Father's hatred for Freddy cools, due largely to the matter of the warrants, and he finally yields to his daughter's blandishments and consents to let Freddy into the family by the front gate. But best of all to Louise at the moment is the fact that Father swears off of "fixing" for life! NEVER AGAIN, says he; it is his final "fix."

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER XXV

PREPARATION OF MANUSCRIPTS

This chapter will deal with the preparation of manuscripts in typewritten form for reading by editors or stars. The typing of synopses and continuities will be taken up separately, beginning with the former.

THE SYNOPSIS

All manuscripts prepared to be submitted to the producers should be typewritten; the hand-written manuscript is extinct.

A detailed synopsis should be written on the usual letter-size sheets (not legal size), using a good grade of light-weight paper (white), but being careful to have it thick enough to stand erasures. Paper so thin that one page may be read through another is not desirable.

The first page is the title-page, and should contain the name of the story, its length and type, and the name of the author. The title may be letter-spaced, using either full capitals or capitals and "lower case," as follows:

T H E T R I C K S O F C H A N C E

(5-reel melodrama)

BY JOHNATHAN DOUGH

The following example employs "lower case" letters in the title:

Steve Brodie's Waterloo

(2-reel Comedy)

Note that the above title is underscored. Underscoring is generally employed on the title-page, to set off the title and the name of the author.

Following the title-page there should be a cast of characters, showing the number and names of the principal characters, divided into major and minor groups, or written as a single group, and the probable number of extras needed to fill the background of certain scenes. Of course, extras need not be named nor described. At the right of each of the principal characters, a brief description may be written, as follows:

ANDREW MACHOOSH, thrifty banker who loves his pennies.

MARY MACHOOSH, his bonny daughter who loves to spend his money.

In the upper left-hand corner of this page the name and address of the author should appear, and on each page of the detailed synopsis. The title of the story may be repeated on this page at the top, followed by the words, "Cast of Characters," and then the names and descriptions of the principal characters and a list of the probable extras.

Names of characters may be underscored or capitalized in full on this page, as the author chooses.

Following the cast, comes the first page of the detailed synopsis. The title of the play may be repeated at the top of the page, or omitted, at will. The words "Detailed Synopsis" should be placed either at top of the page or immediately following the title, if repeated.

The story should be neatly typed with ample margins at the left. Double-space all pages of the synopsis proper. Neat work is desirable. A black ribbon is preferable, as this color is easiest to read under artificial light.

Beginning with the first page of the synopsis all pages may be numbered at top center.

Underscore or capitalize in full all names of characters when first introduced in the story, except that extras and very minor characters need not be so designated.

Wherever in the development of the story the cut-back effect is desired, the two segments of the story may be set off from each other by a line of dots or other break. See the detailed synopses for examples.

After the Ms. is typed, it may be bound in book-form at the left side, using heavy paper covers with the title and name of author thereon. Brads of light weight may be used. This method is not desirable with the continuity, as a rule, for the various scenes have to be separated and binding only impedes the work of the studio. At most, use but a single brad.

The Continuity or Scenario

Everything said about the preparation of title-page and cast of characters applies to these pages in the continuity. The continuity begins with a

title page which is followed by a cast of characters. After this comes a scene-plot or list of the scenes divided according to exteriors and interiors. Note the following:

INTERIORS

INTERIOR OF OFFICE, 6, 9, 12, 53, 62, 101.

LIVING ROOM, 23, 16, 17, 18, 99.

EXTERIORS

YARD OF JONES HOME, 13, 14, 15, 21, 26, 34, 38.

And the like

The numbers following the described settings indicate that the scenes which they represent occur in the settings on the left of them. Thus, six scenes as numbered take place in the interior of an office; and seven scenes as numbered occur in the yard of the Jones home. All settings are listed in the two groups as interiors or exteriors, and the scenes played in them are listed by number to the right. This method enables a quick calculation of the total number of each kind of scenes and sets to be made in the studio.

Following the scene-plot, it is customary to include a brief synopsis boiled down to the mere outlines of the story; but this may be omitted, if the continuity has been prepared by request from a detailed synopsis.

The author should number all pages of the continuity, beginning with the first page of scenes.

The actual scenes should be single-spaced, allowing wide margins at the left, and allowing several

spaces between each scene and the next, or between a scene and a leader, cut-in or insert, as the case may be. The scenes should be numbered at their left, so that the total number of scenes is apparent at the end of the continuity.

All leaders, cut-in leaders or subtitles may be underscored to set them off from the scenes proper. Some authors use full capitalization. Inserts may be set off from the business of the scenes and enclosed in quotation marks.

Specimen scenes are given as follows:

21. INTERIOR OF OFFICE.
Enter John Doe, tosses hat on chair. Sinks into swivel-chair and pushes a button on desk — registers disgust.

22. ANTE-ROOM.
Girl half asleep at desk. Hears ring. Jumps up and takes up note book. Goes into office through nearby door.

23. (Same as 21. Interior of Office).
John Doe registers he will dictate letter. He talks and she takes notes rapidly. He finishes. She hurriedly exits to write letter. He smokes furiously and waits her return. Girl re-enters with letter which she hands him and exits.

INSERT (On Screen) Page of letter.
"And I will not pay your price for the stuff as it is not worth it.
Yours truly,
John Doe."

(Back to scene).
He registers his approval and seals letter.

Note from the above that the descriptions of

all settings are written above the scenes. If a setting is referred to which has already been used, it is described as "same as 21" or whatever number applies, and this is followed by its description, as "interior of office." This repetition saves confusion in the scenes and avoids the necessity of looking back to see what the setting of scene 21 is. The scenes are numbered opposite each one at the left. When an insert is used, the words "on screen" follow it, if it is to be shown, and, if not, the directions are written in, "don't flash" or "don't show."

After an insert, leader or dialogue cut-in has been used, the words, "back to scene" occur. If you care for other examples, refer to the scenario, "Some People's Honor." It is prepared in a style that is worthy of imitation.

When introducing characters for the first time in the continuity, they may be capitalized in full.

The same remarks as to neatness, etc., that apply to the synopsis may be taken for the scenario.

After the Ms. is completed, it should not be bound, as it may be desirable to separate the various pages at the studio. It may, however, be enclosed in a paper cover or folder, folded down the page from top to bottom instead of in the usual manner. This cover may contain the name of the author and the title of the play.

Sometimes two-color typewriter ribbons are used to type the scenario, say black for the business and red for the leaders, inserts, and the like. Black is, however, preferable.

The object in typing manuscripts is to make a legible, easily read, attractive manuscript, easy

to handle and refer to. All parts of it should be properly identified, according to the suggestions given, so that if any of the pages become separated, they may be returned to the proper manuscript without trouble.

A return-addressed envelope, with return postage fully paid, should accompany all scripts sent to the editor. REGISTERED MAIL, with return receipt demanded, is the safest mailing plan. A postal scale is a handy thing to have, and several sizes of envelopes, some just slipping into others (for return) should be kept on hand.

Established authors generally use printed stationery and envelopes; but this is not absolutely necessary.

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER XXVI

CENSORSHIP, THE GROWING MENACE

The title of this chapter is not by any means overstated. The increase in State censorship boards and the increasingly prevalent waves of condemnation and denunciation of the "movies" in the press, the pulpit, the lecture, by educators, pastors, editors and even private citizens who are not ordinarily reformers, can no longer be sneered at by those who wish to continue profitably in the production of film plays. To be sure, the average producer of the day is reasonably honest with the public and decently moral in his views; but it cannot be denied that those there still are who care much more for the sensational word-of-mouth publicity attendant upon a suggestive drama or comedy than for the good of the business; that certain irresponsible actors (especially comedy actors) at the heads of their own producing companies, have indulged in baiting of the persons who complain of their productions, even to the point of insult. This will not do from the "movie" magnates. The recent wave of disgust sent through the ranks of photoplay patrons by the series of exposes on the Pacific coast, involving criminal prosecutions, acquittals, suits for damages and probes, cannot

but inflame the censorship demand and make the way of the producer and author harder. As long as these things are permitted in the industry we shall have censorship, constantly growing more rigid and fanatical.

It may not be amiss at this point to enquire as to the cause of these waves of public condemnation. No one play usually starts them; the causes go deeper. They may be referred back to the mentality of the public. They are the result of mass "complexes" or nuroses aroused by suppressed desires on the part of decent citizens to regulate or control that which has offended in the past and may offend again. When these complexes or nuroses pass that point where they no longer are inhibited by the individual's sense of his personal unfitness or lack of capacity, they become what is known as pandemic PSYCHOSES. A psychosis is a nurosis on the war-path; one which no longer takes account of circumstances but rises superior to them. Thus, we have waves of censorship, of reform, of regulation, of enforcement. The important thing to the producer is what starts them. That they are begun by some adverse publicity or scandal cannot be denied; that some play, peculiarly offensive to any large portion of the public, can and does create a mild wave is beyond question.

But the most acute instigator of these psychoses is the professional reformer, whether paid or unpaid. His is the oratory, the talk, which sets these waves in motion and adds momentum. When some noted divine or professor arises to denounce the photoplay the public pays attention;

often it agrees with him and another wave is begun. The producers shall have to face the music and make up their minds to settle the growing unrest among moving picture patrons in the only sane way — honesty with the public, and not the two-faced methods often practiced in the days which are gone forever. The majority of the producers are, no doubt, sincere; their money is invested, they want to "be good." The experienced author knows enough to suppress any tendency to offend the public morals. But some there are whose morals are of the lowest type, whose ideas are in the paper-backed novel class, whose desires are animalistic. Film comedy has long been a sore-spot. In this branch congregate some of the lowest types of humanity; recruited from the lower stratum of the theatre proper, from the circus, the carnival, and even the house of prostitution. That some trouble should be encountered in assimilating this throng is natural; but the quicker that the weeding out and clean up are administered, the better for the dubious future of the producers. If censorship grows as it will, if fed on the present nutriment, there will be no ART of the photoplay in a few years. All will be reduced to the dead level of the fanatic. There will be no business worth trying to keep alive; for last year the receipts of the picture houses fell off over forty million dollars, so it is asserted.

Perhaps it were not wise to close this side of the subject without mentioning a few cases of dishonesty with the public indulged in by certain producers. A certain photoplay showed a woman being bitten in the breast by a viper; a male

companion then tore off her bodice and sucked the poison from the wound. Here, patently, was a dishonest sensation. The sucking of a woman's breast is, to say the least, suggestive; she could as well have been bitten elsewhere. But the desire for that thrill, which it is the duty of censorship to deny to the young or susceptible, prompted this producer to incorporate this scene.

Another example, in a different vein, is the revolting realism of a picture seen some years ago. In it a woman is shot and falls across the arm of a man, and, from her mouth, in the picture, was caused to trickle a large stream of blood. So REALISTIC was this scene that it smacked of dishonesty on the part of the producer. Art does not demand such FAITHFULNESS to life in sensational or repulsive details and such contempt for detail of other kinds equally essential. This play was of the kind to arouse protest. Instances are within the experience of all who visit the picture playhouses.

Directing attention to the author's contact with censorship, it may be asserted that only common-sense is required in the practice of the art of photoplay writing. The producer is the one directly affected by the rules of censorship; for he will not allow an author to "put over" suggestive material, if he is honest with the public. This may mean that the sensational author finds his work rejected or largely altered in production. It does not, therefore, profit an author anything to be immoral in his writing; even if his piece finds production, its troubles with censorship never end. Somebody loses money on it. That is inevitable.

Censorship Rules

For the rules of Censorship, state or national, it is best for an author to apply to the particular board itself. Rules change to keep pace with tendencies; new censorship boards are being created. No list of rules has any place in a book of this kind; but there are a few suggestions which cannot fail to be of value if accepted by the photoplaywright,

First, we might ask, what constitutes the general underlying complaint against photoplays, what specific things are as a rule objected to everywhere. This is a matter of variables, as elsewhere might be conjectured. But there are certain general tendencies or subjects to be avoided. For one thing the portrayal of crime, making it smart, funny or heroic, is objectionable. It has an influence on the young. For another, the matter of showing how to commit crimes, including homicides, is taboo in many sections. One can be too specific. Again, ridiculing those things generally held sacred (this is the long suit of cheap comedy) is largely objected to. To ridicule a class or race unduly; to create class hatred; to arouse public censure; all these are taboo unless very clearly necessary to the dramatic action — and they seldom are. Love and marriage can be made low, degraded in the pictures; parenthood can be ridiculed; in fact, any number of those things generally accepted by decent people as established, can be rendered odious in some manner or form. There are more ways to be immoral and offensive than can be listed in a book of this size. The intelligence of the author must guide him.

All this is not to say, however, that the author should or must write effete and undramatic stories merely for fear of offending someone. The story must govern the nature of the details and scenes; and if dramatic needs call for a certain act of violence, crime, immoral incident or, in truth, any ordinarily objectionable feature, the dramatic need must decide the author's course. However, in the vast majority of cases, the author can use indirection and suggestion in such a way as to avoid offense. Very seldom is it necessary to indulge in tabood features. For instance, if it is essential to a plot to have a character fall from a skyscraper and be killed, his fall may be shown at the beginning, but it is not essential to show his mangled body in the street below. Suggestion can be used to demonstrate that the fall killed him, if it is his death which is important to the play. A funeral cortege, a group of sorrowing friends beside a grave, any number of devices suggest death. This may be taken as applying with force to other matters in the photoplay.

The matter of censorship, especially that fanatical and bigoted species met with in many localities, makes it impossible for an author, even the best intentioned, to please everyone and yet produce a play worth paying to see. This is the unfortunate aspect of the matter; but there can be little doubt that, unless authors and producers cooperate closely in the future to allay the waves of condemnation sweeping through the ranks of "movie" patrons, the matter of censorship will become much more vexing than it now is. There is no limit to the extremes to which psychoses

can carry people; the passage of certain regulatory and prohibitive laws scoffed at twenty years ago, is warning to those whose interests are at stake to awaken and make an effort to stem the rising tide.

As for the author, he can best aid by refraining from the writing of material calculated to be offensive, even though it might pass into circulation and weather the rules of most boards. The most fanatical waves of reform follow upon the discovery of the reformers that some play has been allowed to pass which is offensive and may be denounced. That is bread in the mouth of the professional agitator and reformer. Nothing affords him nearly the exquisite pleasure presented in such an opportunity to "climb upon" the entire photoplay industry and denounce it from every angle; unfortunately, these men and women too often have influence in legislatures and governmental bodies. It is high time to do something about it!

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

CHAPTER XXVII

DISPOSING OF THE STORY

Selling literary or dramatic compositions is strictly a business or commercial problem, calling for business methods and ability. The popular notion is that authors are unfitted intellectually or by temperament to undertake business matters, including the sale of their own products. As a matter of fact, there is no good reason why an author should not have ordinary business acumen. It is admitted that many business-men have talents outside their own daily routine; many of them have avocations or side-lines calling for varied abilities. Professional men also come within this circle. The lawyer must know more than the law; the engineer must understand many things besides physics or geology or mathematics. But the fact remains that comparatively few authors, especially beginners, do handle their own wares to the best advantage. It is more largely due to disinclination than to lack of ability; or it may be due to lack of time to devote to the business side of authorship. At any rate, some advice to beginners is not superfluous.

Little advice can be given, obviously, as to when and where to sell a particular play. The problem is, as we say in mathematics, one com-

posed of variables. The variables must, of course, be known before the problem can be attacked. Thus, no list of producers who buy plays can be given in this book. Producers are changing; stars are going from contract to contract; directors are changing their methods; demands for certain material are governed by the variables. Thus, in order to know when to submit a certain kind of story to any producer, one must know what that producer wants at any time. The author needs constantly new market advice, if he would know what producers want; and there are publications printed to give him market news at frequent intervals.

Form of the Story

Perhaps the most important question is the form the photoplay should take to be submitted indiscriminately to the producers. It may be stated as a general rule that the detailed synopsis is best adapted to this purpose, since it gives plot, characters and action, with all essential detail, and leaves the continuity to the producer. This is not to imply, however, that the SYNOPTIST need not understand continuity. As has been shown in the foregoing chapters, continuity is the underlying and most important portion of screen playwriting. The synoptist may be able to sell his synopses, but if asked to supply continuity to a story he should be able to do so. If offered a staff position he must understand the scenario form.

Returning to synopses, there is considerable difference in the amount of detail which they may contain. Some writers go largely into detail,

their "scripts" running into many pages. Others are satisfied with fewer details and more pertinent ones. The amount of detail should depend on the story; if the plot is new, the characters novel, the settings unusual, description is needed; if the story is not remarkably novel or the settings not out of the ordinary, less detail is required. Of course, all irrelevant matter, such as dialogue and useless moralizing, must be eliminated. The synopsis is not a short-story. Occasionally, where some short and striking speech is made by a character, it may be given — but not as a rule.

Remuneration

The question of remuneration is one which looms large in the amateur mind. The answer to it cannot be nailed down, because prices change. A few years ago one hundred dollars was a fair price for a five-reel photoplay; today about five times that would be moderate for the beginner's first story. For his second, from one to two thousand dollars would not be high. A tired public, which demands value for its money, is raising standards and prices. Of course, plays shorter than five reels do not command so large a price as those of full-length. Also, individual conditions must govern sales. Some beginners will take less for a good story, in order to establish themselves with a producer; and any producer will buy to his advantage, if the chance presents itself. The author should, however, stand out for the prices named above.

C. Gardner Sullivan, whose name is a household word so well known is he as a photoplaywright, has stated (Picture-Play Magazine) that

one thousand dollars is the minimum an author should receive for a good story. Since that was written the demand for better screen material has become even more acute, and prices may be expected to increase. Incidentally, it should be stated that Mr. Sullivan is an expert continuity writer, although his advice to the beginner may be summed up as advocating the synopsis for submission to producers indiscriminately.

CHANNELS OF SALE

What is the best channel for the new author? Shall he submit his plays himself, or shall he employ an agent? This brings us back to the opening paragraph; for, if the author undertakes his own sales, he must know the market, know the stars' abilities and keep records of his transactions. On the other hand, a reliable agent saves all this labor and earns his ten per cent. commission. Good agents are not so plentiful or efficient in the photoplay field as in the theatrical field. The novice had best avoid all brokers or agents whose reputations are not established. Some of them have been in the business of "collecting" plots and ideas. Brokers connected with revision bureaus, mail-order propositions, and the like, are to be shunned by the wary. There have been and will be frauds.

On the Pacific coast there is a corporation which acts as a brokerage for the products of its students, for it requires the writer to enroll for its course in photoplay writing at the regular tuition rates. After enrollment it undertakes to sell the worthy material of its writers, charging ten per cent. therefor. Whether or not the

unknown writer (barred from this agency because of lack of name) should pay toll to have his plays handled by an agent is something to be solved by the individual. It might be wise in some cases, in others not. There is nothing to prevent the author from offering his plays direct to producers on the Pacific coast; but there is the suspicion that many beginners are "steered" to this corporation by the producers interested in it, regardless of the inherent merits of the story. If the reader of this book should have such an experience, he should avoid the producer who "steers" him, unless, of course, the advice to enroll for systematic instruction is merited by the story. Reading a book is not the whole of education; but if the reader of this one has solved the various exercises and made the technique his own, there is little reason why he should not be able to write good synopses or dramatic continuities. At any rate, this matter is for individual disposition; this is merely a hint to the author.

Protection for Photoplaywrights

In the early days of the industry, thievery was the recognized method of obtaining material. Either standard or classic literature was "borrowed," paraphrased, redressed and palmed off on an eager public. Piracy and plagiarism flourished. The trusting writer submitted his ideas and often they turned up on the screen thinly disguised and under another title. The writer had no protection, unless he had witnesses to prove his authorship. There still are, be it known, dishonest producers and thieving employees; but the producers have learned to be careful. Since

they are liable for any stolen material produced by them, they find it necessary to be cautious. There are still risks to be taken in submitting a typewritten manuscript, for not every person is honest; but the greatest danger lurks among the hangers-on, the fringe of the industry. Some fly-by-night actors (especially comedy actors) there still are, to whom it is courting theft to submit a Ms.; but the so-called brokerages, syndicates, revision bureaus, mail-order schools and boards of council are most dangerous. It is decidedly wise to send material to those whose methods are known beyond any question. Certain bureaus have, in the past, been "feeders" for some writer, who got his plots from the stories submitted for revision. If criticism is desired, seek those of established reputation; besides, real criticism can be given only by those qualified to judge photoplays as commercial products, and those so qualified are nearly always open to investigation as to their reliability.

Specific means for an author's protection against thefts are not wanting. The author may secure copyright protection — but not on a typewritten story. In order to secure copyright, one must have set up and printed the material to be protected, after which two cpoies must be sent to Washington with the necessary application and fee. (Apply to Registrar of Copyrights.) A synopsis running from two to fourteen pages double-spaced should not be expensive to print. But with continuities (requiring up to 50 pages typewritten), the cost is greater due to the length and to the increased labor in "setting up." However, after an author has established a demand

for his stories and can judge their merits from the producers' bias, printing is the safest course.* Arrangements may be made with a printer who offers satisfactory service at reasonable rates.

For the beginning scenarist who does not care to undertake the expense of printing and copyright, there are organizations and societies which, for a small fee, offer a registration service to writers. The scenarist may register or file a copy of his stories as evidence of authorship and of the TIME of authorship. The law requires that the time of authorship be established, where any counter claim arises over the same plot or a similar plot. Now, ordinarily an author might be able to prove authorship by witnesses, but proof of the time might be more difficult, unless there is some source by which it may be established, such as registration. If a thief claim to have written the story first, his claim may be refuted by the record of registration. Often two writers invent similar plots or tactics, and it becomes important to know which was put in circulation first.

Writing for a particular star is sometimes advised to the novice. For the author who can do so effectively, it may offer a quicker route to acceptance; but the habit of writing effective stories, excellent of craftsmanship, dramatic and appealing is more desirable, since these stories may be submitted to any number of stars, and a single rejection will not discard them. At any rate, regard photoplay writing as a profession

*Comparatively few authors, known or unknown, follow this method of safeguarding their work.

and follow it as such until success or decisive failure is reached; but make it decisive, one way or the other.

Let intelligence be your guide — and good luck!

Modern Photoplay Writing
Its Craftsmanship

APPENDIX

The subjoined advice upon the business of authorship is included in the appendix for the reason that it did not seem to have a particular place in the chapters.

A CARD FILE FOR WRITERS. An author should at all times know the whereabouts of a manuscript. A handy method of keeping track of scripts is the card file system. A small card file is secured, and a card chosen for each manuscript. At the top of the card is written the name of the story; at the left side is written the date of mailing out the script, followed by the name of the company or star to whom submitted, the date of return or purchase of the script, the purchase price, and the amount of postage expended. As soon as a card has been filled, it may be filed away behind the index and a new card is then made for the script. In this way one may keep a good record in a small space and with fewest entries.

A SCRAP BOOK. For the writer who has begun to make sales, a scrap book, about 9 by 12 inches with heavy, board covers, is a pleasureable object. In it may be pasted advertising matter, criticisms, publicity, correspondence, etc., pertaining to any story. This is not, be it said, a necessity to the author.

A POSTAL SCALE. One of the small-size postal scales, weighing first-class matter up to sixteen half-ounces, should be owned by every scenarist. No need to overpay or underpay postage as long as one has a scale properly adjusted.

TYPEWRITERS. The portable typewriter is popular with authors because it can be carried from place to place without great labor.

NOTE BOOKS. Ideas are liable to come anywhere, at any time, and a notebook is a necessity. The loose-leaf type of book, in varying sizes to suit particular requirements, is the best form. When its pages are filled, it may be given a new set and the old ones transferred to permanent notes and filed away.

A WORKING LIBRARY. A few books well chosen; textbooks, references, a World Almanac, dictionary, the latest market news, a few authors — these are useful to the writer. Apart from a good, compact, working library, the writer is, so to put it, "going it blind."

A REFERENCE LIBRARY. Access to a good reference library, public or private, is, upon occasion, a necessity. Many stories demand research work. The author who has no outside facilities but must depend on his own books, had best begin the nucleus of a library. His favorite standard authors, a good encyclopedia, works of art and science, and a liberal inclusion of classical and standard authors are desirable. The writer will largely determine the contents of his library; but it should be made up with its usefulness in constant view. Dr. Eliot's five-foot list is a good starter.

SCHOOLS FOR WRITERS. The best way to become a photoplay writer is by writing, directed by intelligent and systematic study. For those who cannot study unless their efforts are guided by others, who cannot accomplish anything unless they are advised by outsiders, the school is, perhaps, an advantage. But there are few schools worth enrolling in today. Our colleges may in the future offer the photoplay writer the facilities he is entitled to; but at present good courses are very rare.

Nothing can compare with intelligently graded and systematic study guided by careful criticism and advice; but such is not to be had offhand; and the fakirs are legion. Moreover, the price of a course is no guarantee of its usefulness to any author — the high cost of advertising may be added to the low cost of tuition. On the other hand, it is best to shun those schools whose courses are offered in a cheap form and for a small cost. Often they are merely selling something without regard for results. A school which would guarantee success to the student is the school all seek; but is there such a school, and, if one there is, can it guarantee success to more than one or two per cent. of those who, even under strict rules, are eligible? If, indeed, you possess the ability, the creative impulse and imagination, the inner urge of talent or genius, you can, if you are willing to labor, write your own guarantees. But, be it understood that admission to a school, even under examination or other test, is no certain omen of success, however encouraging or heartening it may be.

APPENDIX

Definitions of some terms used in this book which may not be quite clear to the novice:

SCENARIST: Literally, one who writes scenarios; in general usage as a synonym for photoplaywright or screen dramatist.

SYNOPTIST: One who writes synopses; used generally as above.

DETAILED SYNOPSIS: An elaborated synopsis amounting to a dramatic story minus dialogue.

CONTINUITY: A scenario, or a play in scenes; the truly dramatic or photodramatic form.

SCRIPT: A term for the manuscript whether synopsis or continuity.

EDITOR: He who reads the plays submitted to the photoplay producer; often a staff author.

STAFF AUTHOR: One who is hired to write for a producer.

CONTINUITY WRITER: A scenarist hired to write the scenarios or continuities from stories selected for filming. A technical writer or dramaturgist.

DIRECTOR: The person having in charge the acting and "shooting" of the scenes of a photoplay. Sometimes a general manager and jack of all trades.

"LOT:" An expression used to denote the ground at the plant of a producer; the place where much of the "shooting" goes on.

APPENDIX

ON LOCATION: Means that a certain company is located somewhere shooting the scenes of a play.

"SHOOTING:" Photographing the scenes of action.

This is a list of references which may be consulted by the aspiring photoplaywright. Many of the works on the photoplay are obsolete, although not all of them are so.

General Principles of Dramatic Structure and Effect

The Technique of the Drama . . . . . W. T. Price
Analysis of Play Construction . . . . . W. T. Price
Dramatic Technique . . . . . George Pierce Baker
Play Making . . . . . Wm. Archer
Principles of Play Making . . . . . Brander Matthews
The Art of Playwriting . . . . . A. Hennequin
The Play of Today . . . . . E. Hunt
The Drama, Its Law and Technique . . . . . E. Woodbridge
The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations . . . . . Georges Polti
Problems of the Playwright . . . . . Clayton Hamilton

On Photoplay Writing

Art of Photoplay Writing . . . . . E. F. Barker
The Art of Photoplay Making . . . . . V. O. Freeburg
How to Write for the Movies . . . . . L. O. Parsons
Writing the Photoplay . . . . . Leeds & Beenwein
The Motion Picture Story . . . . . Wm. L. Wright
How to Write for Moving Pictures . . . . . M. Bertsch
How to Write a Photoplay . . . . . A. W. Thomas
Photoplay Making . . . . . Howard T. Dimick
Technique of the Photoplay . . . . . E. W. Sargent
Photoplay Hints and Helps . . . . . A. W. Thomas
A. B. C. of the Movies . . . . . R. E. Welsh
Cinema Craftsmanship . . . . . F. T. Patterson

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